The background of the cover is a deep, textured green. It features several large, overlapping circular patterns that resemble the spokes of a wheel or the segments of a fan. These patterns are rendered in varying shades of green, from dark forest green to a lighter, almost yellowish-green, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall effect is reminiscent of a traditional textile or a stylized natural pattern.

BUDDHISM, ETHICS AND SOCIETY:

The conflicts and dilemmas of our times

Padmasiri de Silva

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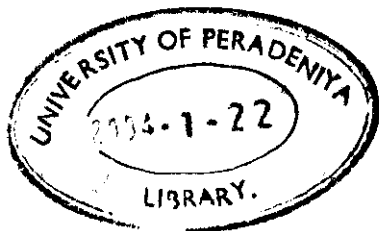
Dedication to family and friends

To the memory of my beloved parents Richard and Laura de Silva.

To the memory of my beloved wife Kalyani.

To our children Maneesh, Adeesh and Chandreesh, their wives Harini, Ananga and Fiona, and our granddaughter Ishka Yugani.

Also to the memory of a great friend in the Dhamma Godwin Samararatne.



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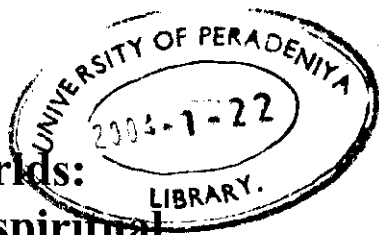
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Bridging two worlds: The secular and the spiritual

Does ethics inhabit two worlds, one the secular world of social concerns and the householder's search for a decent and meaningful life; and the other the Buddhist quest for liberation? They may appear as two worlds if one attempts to see a large gap between the life of renunciation and the life of the householder. The life of renunciation can be seen as far removed from the anguish and concerns, the noise and chatter of lay life. We can also look at every moment of a householder's life with an eye for spiritual sacredness. The metaphors, contexts, stories and analysis of the doctrine found in the discourses of the Buddha and the living personality profiles over the years display different blends of the secular and the spiritual. Some householders are gradually closing the gap, while others have displayed a kind of chasm in the way they live, and often fail to live up to the norms they aspire to. There are differences of degree between the liberated Arahants, who dwell completely appeased in this world, and others who have attained spiritual progress as stream-enterers, once-returners and non-returners. For a householder, attaining the state of a stream-enterer is certainly a possibility. But when we look at the ethics of the householder from the perspectives of the fully liberated arahant, certain paradoxes emerge. A penetrating study of Buddhist wisdom illustrates the difference as follows:

Generally in the world, very few are keen on emptying the well. The majority simply draw water to make use of it. But there is no end to this making use of the water. Only when one decides upon emptying the well, will one be drawing water just to throw it away without grasping. This is the position of those who are keen on seeing the emptiness of the world, and it is they that are fully appeased in the world... They live in the world fully appeased, having extinguished the fires of lust, hate and delusion (Ñānananda 1999:24).

Thus relationships between the secular and the spiritual take many forms: there is harmony, there is tension, there is an abyss, and in all

this there is paradox. Perhaps these conflicting images are only seen with clarity and insight by those who are liberated and those who are close to being liberated. The full meaning of this graphic metaphor is only seen by them. We who are yet drawing water may get glimpses of it in some of those little liberating moments in life. But the Buddha says that we need to start on the journey of liberation without delay. While accepting the sense of urgency that is found in the message of the Buddha, that 'our turbans are on fire', it is wise to make a start at some point. Sometimes, by necessity one is engrossed in duties and responsibilities to family, relations, friends, to the downtrodden, the needy and society. Sometimes, one is aware of a moderate range of desires and ambitions and works around them. Often, one is struck by the wrongs that others do, but fails to discern one's own conceit in leading a righteous life. So long as one realises that this is not the sole universe, a good life within its secular limits can certainly lead to the path towards liberation. One's whole life is a pilgrimage. As a certain philosopher remarked, we are often 'thrown' into the world, and that is why the process of awakening is slow. The tragic crisis of a Patacāra and Kisāgotami, and the spark of divinity that the Buddha discovered in the robber Aṅgulimāla, are not mere stories, they are paradigms of human possibilities.

This modest collection of essays only surveys the conventional world of social engagement and ethics and does not attempt to explore the higher reaches and the more profound terrain of a liberated mind. But I wish to suggest in some indirect way that to live the ideal life of a householder as given in the eightfold noble path is a firm grounding and a good base for making some progress towards the path to liberation. As I put these essays together, it strikes me that the dialectic of paradox and tension in the householder's attempt to make progress are also expressions of the inevitable confrontation with *dukkha*. One of the most inspiring points about the Buddha's pedagogy is the wide variety of contexts and people that he confronted in the 45 years he spent preaching the *dhamma*. Yet this optimism needs a restraining note. The Buddha cautions that for the person who is really struck by that stirring for liberation (*samvega*), there is a certain path to follow, the eightfold noble path, and that is the only way. The words ring in our ears, 'only

when one decides upon emptying the well, will one be drawing water just to throw it away without grasping' (Ñānananda 1999).

Buddhism as a religion and a way of life has faced different types of social challenges. During contemporary times, not merely is there a great interest in the social challenges to Buddhist ethics, but there has been an interest in the exploration of 'inner space' through the practice of meditation. This is certainly a path that closes to some extent the gap between the secular and the spiritual. A very important point that we often fail to recognise is that the Buddha saw both the monk and the householder as belonging to a large community where there was a reciprocal relation, the monks recognising their dependence on the lay community for their basic needs of food, robes, medicine and dwellings. There are traditions, as in Thailand, where lay people follow a celibate's life for short periods. The later traditions of Buddhism have also advocated lifestyles for monks that are different from the early Buddhist tradition. Monks and lay people can only cement a closer understanding by the mutual recognition of the ethical codes that govern them. Gaps between theory and practice are found on both sides, and are not limited to Buddhism as a religion. The immense politicisation of religion again has brought more misery to the world than it has blessings. One must take this concern seriously and find ways of minimising the gap.

The compassion and vision of monks and lay people may perhaps help us to clear the ground, so that the distorting politicisation of Buddhism may be reduced. As long as greed for power, fame and positions are dominant, and as long as there are political slogans that use the fuel of poverty and frustration to ignite a worse fire than the one they are trying to extinguish, violence and war will prevail over the search for peace. This book does not attempt to answer all these questions. The chapters are focussed on specific issues in Buddhist social ethics and are arranged so as to display the kind of challenges Buddhism has faced over the years. These essays offer a basis for reflection and contemplation, as well as discussion. Paradoxes, dilemmas and tensions may be endemic to a situation, but a basic code of humanistic ethics is always possible. If that does not work, a deeper understanding is necessary. Today, ethnic issues, political conflicts and

economic chaos are presenting a new picture of what we call *dukkha*. It is strange that we break our heads and hearts to find a basis in history, law and statistics to prove theories about a 'homeland', when the quest of the homeless renunciation of the Buddha seems to say that *samsāra* is our only home! But yet, Buddhist and other communities emerge in both physical and psychological space. As is pointed out in a later chapter, if 'identities' are pushed beyond reasonable boundaries conflicts are inevitable. These are simple home truths that the wisdom of the Buddha conveys. This volume does not offer solutions, merely invitations to put our heads, hearts and hands together and explore realistic ways of dealing with the chaos around us.

Most of the papers included in this work were used in a course offered to post-graduate students in the Department of History at Monash University. I was able to teach this course, 'Buddhism, Ethics, Society and Politics', with the assistance of Dr Ian Mabbett, who dealt with the historical perspectives of the issues on Buddhism we examined. While material from the discourses of the Buddha was discussed, our main objective was the examination of ethical issues in relation to central Buddhist doctrines. The previously unpublished papers in this volume were originally conference papers and have been adapted to fit the objectives of this book. Thus the papers fall in to a loose kind of unified framework. Apart from the fact that this monograph may be a useful reference work for students studying Buddhist social ethics, I thought it would be a good idea to put together these essays that were written during different phases of my academic career. Another important feature of these essays is that they reflect very specific types of challenges that Buddhism faced in Sri Lanka and in other Asian Buddhist countries. The chapters represent these different strands of the socio-political challenges to Buddhism. These challenges encouraged scholars to have a fresh look at the discourses of the Buddha, which are very rich in their contextual flavour. Apart from the main doctrinal corpus found in the discourses, there are innumerable discourses that were preached in response to specific contextual issues, and they included advice to householders, kings, ascetics, farmers, carpenters, traders, people in crisis and philosophers. The tremendous variety in the techniques of pedagogy, the wisdom and the compassion shown across

barriers of class, caste, colour and gender shown by the Buddha brings to us a message of perennial wisdom across the gulf of 25 centuries. But it must be emphasised that the social challenges Buddhism has encountered over the years do not affect the wisdom of the eightfold path and especially the five precepts. In fact, the revival of interest in meditation cannot be sustained if the basic moral code is not integrated into our lives. This is so important that there are parallel moral codes in other religions and they are enshrined in the laws of many lands. Also, the Buddha's discovery about the nature of things as they are—the causal patterns on which our lives rest, the doctrines of unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and non-self, as well as the central doctrine of the four noble truths—will always remain as the background to our search for a meaningful life and the quest to move from bondage to liberation. Thus, while appreciating the appeal to context, Buddhist pragmatism and realism, these basic pre-conditions for living a life according to the message of the Buddha remain unchanged. If not, we fall into the traps of relativism and fail to appreciate the spirit in which the Buddha presented the eightfold noble path, as it is basically meant for practice.

Having emphasised the message of Buddhism as an answer to the perennial concerns of life and death and human suffering, I must emphasise that the message of the Buddha has to be followed, lived and integrated within our lives. If we try to grasp it and dogmatically defend it, we lose the human dimensions of the doctrine—a doctrine that was not meant for scholarly embellishment, mere argument, debate and gossip or ornament, but to be practised. The ethics of the Buddha was offered for practice. As one of the greatest living Buddhist monks, Venerable Achariya Mahaboowa Nanasampanna, observed: mastering all the ethical rules and the different types of defilements of the mind, without practising, is like memorising the names of all the criminals in the land without making any attempt to identify them and bring them before the court of justice. This means that a life really lived according to the authentic Buddhist norms is of very great value, compared with a scholarly exposition of Buddhism. While the study of Buddhism does give us confidence that our beliefs are rational, it needs to be followed by practice and tested through the path of Buddhist experientialism.

With these introductory remarks, I shall summarise some of the basic concerns found in this collection of essays. It is by looking critically but compassionately at my own life and career, and recognising some of its limitations, that I write these lines, rather than offering any normative model of Buddhist practice. Learning and unlearning is a process that we undergo throughout our lives. When certain occasions demand that we become more flexible with the philosophical sandcastles we construct, these occasions are important. There is always a sense of uncertainty in life, and a crisis (*dukkha*) calls for deep reflective understanding and for creative solutions. To think that we always have a ready formula to solve a problem does not mirror the contingency and uncertainty in the world. To recognise this predicament, there is a great need for humility. This opens up a way of making it easier to listen to oneself and others. The life and work of the Dalai Lama of Tibet, Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Gosananda Thero of Cambodia and many others who have followed their great example do show that flexibility, contextualism, understanding and compassion are the resources, the means for problem solving in the area of social ethics. So long as there is sincerity, conviction, confidence and *saddhā* in our leaders, some order may be restored in a world that is moving towards chaos and uncertainty. The situation in Sri Lanka is not just sad, it is tragic. It is a land where, during my childhood, Sinhalese and Tamils, Buddhists and Hindus lived in great peace and with understanding. I offer no magic solution to bring back peace to Sri Lanka. To go on examining who is to be blamed and raise a whole series of arguments and counter arguments is an endless process without a point. There is a very human side to war, the human suffering involved. I remember that in Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the man*, a soldier in retreat, taking refuge in a house, had in his pocket not bullets but cream chocolates!

My initial interest in the social challenges to Buddhism came from participating in the Christian–Marxist–Buddhist dialogues, and they presented the secular challenges to religion. While Buddhism emphasised the inner transformation of the individual, the Marxists were committed to the transformation of the economic order, if necessary, even by revolution. There was a need to examine the Buddhist methods for changing the social structures that nourished human greed,

as well as the Marxist neglect of the dynamics of inner psychological change. The next phase in the dialogue on Buddhism and social challenges was the development debate. This was a very topical concern in Asian countries, where religion had a role in exploring a philosophy of economic development. Fritz Schumacher's writings on Buddhist economics provided an inspiring background for developing a Buddhist contribution to Asian perspectives on development. Though this appeared to be a passing phase, I have returned to it during recent times in my exploration of green economics. The religion and development conferences provided a forum for Buddhists in Sri Lanka and Thailand, and representatives from other religions. Especially what was known as the 'Asian Cultural Forum' provided me with an opportunity to exchange ideas with Buddhists, as well as Christians, Hindus and Muslims, and secular humanists and Marxists.

The two strands of secular challenges to Buddhism and also to other religions do indicate that there was a very healthy atmosphere for inter-religious dialogue. The next phase was the focus on religion and human rights. By this time, the inter-religious dialogues in which I participated receded to the background, and the ethnic issues generated by bad politics came to the forefront. The chapters on equality, identity profiles and communal violence, the ethics of moral indignation, human rights and religious anthropologies reflect my own attempts to think deeply on these issues. But bad communal politics cast a tragic shadow across Sri Lanka.

The fourth strand in this collection of essays is my interest in moral dilemmas, which runs through many chapters. This was a theme constantly raised in our course on Buddhist ethics at Monash University. I have discussed this issue again from a fresh perspective in a study of Buddhist environmental philosophy.

In the last section, I have examined the issues pertaining to a Buddhist work ethic. I have also discussed the place of the practice of mindfulness and the development of emotional maturity in generating a healthy work ethic. A short epilogue on war and peace is, I hope, a fitting concluding thought on an intractable human issue.

All these essays may be brought under the rubric of socially-engaged Buddhism. The term has acquired new momentum and taken fresh meanings, especially in Thailand. This is not exactly 'old wine in a new bottle', but the different phases in the secular challenges to Buddhism outlined in this short introduction and reflected in this volume would provide interesting material for the study of the soil in which the new version of socially-engaged Buddhism has been planted.

Apart from this monograph, most of my writings have been in the field of Buddhist psychology, particularly in emotion studies. This was a highly neglected field. But it is of great interest and also very encouraging to find that Buddhist psychology is acquiring a new social significance to the great tides of social change generating psychological dissonance, stress and anxiety, new forms of psychosomatic diseases, and positively, the search for a new work ethic and the humanisation of medicine. The therapeutic frontiers of Buddhist psychology have expanded. This is a new phase in my research, in which I find a very satisfying mediating point to resolve the apparently in-built tension between the social and the psychological dimensions of Buddhism. The last section, on mindfulness practice and right livelihood, captures some of my interest in these issues. Tensions will always remain and mediating points will emerge. By way of bringing this monograph closer to contemporary times, and also to add a component of my current research, I am bringing the meditative and the social dimensions of Buddhism together. The two chapters dealing with the search for a spiritually-enhancing work ethic offer another dimension of socially engaged Buddhism.

Countries in Asia, whether predominantly Buddhist or not, are going through difficult times, of economic and political transformation, issues of internal group conflict, of peace and war, ethnic and political tension. Scholars working on these issues, searching for resources in religion and culture, could generate a little light in regions where darkness and lack of understanding prevail. Scholarship and social activism may from a very narrow perspective look like an unhealthy blend. Perhaps, there is a pathway for scholars to shed their aloofness from society, and have

a real impact on people and the world in which they live. The secular and the spiritual form a whole network of relationships.

The best way to use these essays as tools for exploring the subject of ethics and society in Buddhism is to study the discourses of the Buddha. The excellent translations of the *Majjhima Nikāya* (*Middle length sayings*) by Bhikkhu Ñānamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi and the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* (*Kindred sayings*) by Bhikkhu Bodhi provide very good source material for teaching. I have also not examined the material in the later Mahayana, Zen and Tibetan traditions, and these also provide very useful material on social ethics from a cross-cultural perspective. Many current issues that I have not discussed are examined comprehensively in some of the works cited as selected readings.

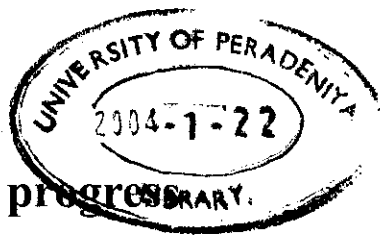
Nor have I engaged in historical and sociological analyses of many of the issues though such analysis is a necessary facet of an integral understanding of Buddhist social ethics. In conclusion it must be emphasised that these essays are offered to generate deep reflection and ways of finding practical approaches to dealing with these problems; they do not provide a complete diagnosis of the tension and conflicts that emerge in society. I have tried, where possible, to balance my own immersion in the attractions of normative Buddhism by paying heed to those who have pointed to visible gaps between theory and practice. But I do not make any attempt to examine these issues. There are also contexts where, at the level of social ethics, followers of different religions may work towards the solution of problems. In fact, some of the current problems have emerged due to tensions between religions. Those engaged in the generation of a liberating atmosphere at the secular level and the development of inter-religious understanding are also on the path of a small religious pilgrimage.

The basic guidelines of the ethico-psychological contours of lay life have been given by the Buddha in simple, clear and direct discourse. But they may not take root unless the ethics is nourished by the regular practise of mindfulness. Buddhist ethics, compared with some of its western counterparts, emerges strongly and naturally as a blend of morality, mindfulness and the refinement of our skills in discernment

of the nature of things as they are. Buddhist ethics is not merely centred on rules, it is a prescription for human suffering that attempts to harness our truly human potentialities for loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity, as well as patience, endurance, gratitude and a generosity of spirit—an emotional sensibility. It is a blend of wisdom and compassion. There are many reasons why these qualities do not always emerge strongly in the world in which we live, though they are certainly often found around our lives.

I shall conclude this brief introduction with these most inspiring lines from Venerable Āchariya Mahaboowa Ñānasampanna's *Straight from the heart* (1987:93–94):

The Dhamma is a Truth, and everyone's common property. Whether we are men or women, lay or ordained, we can all have mindfulness and discernment. When we are willing, any man or woman, any monk or layperson can use any of the methods to cure defilements and gain release. We needn't create problems to plague our hearts and waste our time. 'Since when do I have that potential?' Don't think that! However much or little, you can see it right here in the mind.



Religion and social progress

Analysis of the relationship between 'religion' and 'social progress' will differ according to one's concept of progress. But the attempt to answer the rather vacuous question, 'What is progress?' will flounder at the very threshold of inquiry. Let us merely remind ourselves of some interesting features of the word 'progress'. The term progress implies something that we approve of, or something to which we attach a value. The evaluative overtones of the word are clear when progress is compared with the value-neutral concept of 'social change'.

Of course, the word could mean a continued movement or series of changes in any direction (progress of a journey, of a disease). But we are concerned here with its more specific meaning 'as a movement in a direction seemed desirable' (Baillie 1951:2). Thus, in observing the history of a country, one could say that there is certainly progress, meaning that change in that country approaches the kind of goals and ends that one approves of. It may be possible to give an apparently more objective picture by saying that there are certain social laws operating in the world, by which one could determine the degree of progress. But this cannot be separated from the ideals and values regarding what constitutes national progress. In general, it appears that one ought to be aware of the claim that progress is a value-oriented word.

The word progress has diverse aspects, which may conflict with or supplement each other. Advance in technical knowledge may not be sufficient to ensure social and moral progress; the use of scientific knowledge for destructive purposes is not a sign of progress. Accelerated economic development can have unintended social evils; a high standard of living does not always go with a meaningful use of leisure; vast strides made to tap the natural environment create problems of environmental degradation and pollution.

Traditional cultural forms are undermined by incessant social change, but a new lifestyle has not evolved to meet the oncoming challenges. The agony of modernisation has been aptly described by a social critic:

People may live in apartment houses where they do not know their neighbour, work in offices or factories where their colleagues change every few months, prepare food purchased from or delivered by unknown persons, eat among strangers in restaurants, enjoy entertainment either transmitted by electronic devices or seen in theatres or stadiums filled with persons one has never seen before, worship in churches where ceremony, clergymen, and congregations are unfamiliar, and grow up as children without close relations with parents and in environments where danger lurks in the street, and trees and animals are rarely seen (Black 1966:1-34).

This kind of impersonal life in the modern metropolis should be compared with the closely knit communities in some of the traditional social groups in the rural setting. This is not to make a complete rejection of the developments in technology, but to emphasise the need for a self-critical and healthy adjustment to new changes without surrendering the finest aspects of the human person to automation and machines.

In the light of these facts, the word progress takes us to the very predicament of people trying to understand and adjust to sweeping changes. Take the major nations of Asia. Are they baffled by technology or struck down by the pangs of hunger and poverty? When one part of the world is concerned with non-material needs—'peace of mind, human dignity, cultural values, ethos...' (Calder 1968:36)—others are lacking the basic requirements for a decent living. Progress for whom? Progress for what? These are baffling questions. Are we going to agree with Ritchie Calder (1968:39) that 'This is a world of contradictions, one-third of the world worrying about surplus goods and surplus leisure; two-thirds slaving in muscle-drudgery and wondering where their next meal is coming from'?

Whether the technological needs of the West are relevant to the less-developed nations in Asia is a timely question. Are we going to say that there are two worlds today, one struck by material hunger, and the other by spiritual hunger? Then who needs religion?

Finally, why are we interested in 'progress' at all? The vitality of the belief in progress is in general due to the essentially human discontent with things as they are, a hope for better things, and the

capacity to offer ideals for the improvement of the human conditions. Some have even referred to a 'climbing instinct in man' (Ginsberg 1972:12). In recent times there has been a weakening of this belief in progress, both at the practical level and the theoretical level. Ginsberg (1972:11) says that the belief in progress has been weakened 'by the growing recognition that advances in technical knowledge are by no means sufficient to ensure social and moral progress'. He also says that on the theoretical side, there has emerged a sceptical attitude to progress, 'reinforced by the revival of cyclical theories of civilisation by such writers as Spengler and Pareto, by the movements in modern psychology which emphasise the irrational elements in human nature, and, on the side of theology, by a reformulation of the doctrine of original sin'.

It is not my intention here to examine some of these speculative theories regarding the course of human progress, but to focus attention on the conflict between technology and religious values. While science and technology provide us with a dimension for human progress, religious and cultural values can give form and direction to it and provide a continuous self-criticism of the ongoing process of change. To uphold a concept of progress without any insight into human contentment and happiness is indeed a kind of wild-goose chase!

Forward stampeders and homecomers

Even if there is a big gap between two worlds, one in the height of technological development and the other struggling with problems of food, clothing and shelter, the evolution of a lifestyle bringing them together is not impossible. Schumacher is one of those who says that Asia need not make a blind imitation of the West in its drive for economic advancement, but develop its industries and agriculture to meet local needs. To the West he has a message: 'What is being called into question is not our competence with regards to means, but our realism and wisdom with regards to ends' (Schumacher 1993). The West has become entrapped by the spell of technology, gigantism, speed and violence. Technology does not recognise any self-limiting or self-balancing principle. A way of life based on:

permanent limitless expansionism in a finite environment cannot last long. The creative work done by human hands has been replaced by machines. The destruction of human work-enjoyment has to be offset by the development of a technology 'with a human face', and a healthy work-orientation. Virtually all real production has been turned into an inhuman chore which does not enrich man but empties him.

Schumacher makes a case for developing a new lifestyle compatible with the real needs of human nature, with the health of living nature around us. In the field of agriculture, he makes a case for a non-violent and gentle orientation towards people and nature, and in envisaging an ethic of permanence sees much hope in the work of conservationists, ecologists, protectors of wildlife, and promoters of organic agriculture.

He makes an interesting distinction between the 'forward stampeders' and 'homecomers'. This is what the forward stampeders say: '...standing still means going down; you must go forward'. There is nothing wrong with technology except that it is incomplete. 'If there is trouble with the environment, we shall make more stringent laws against pollution, and faster economic growth to pay for antipollution measures. If there are problems about natural resources, we shall turn to synthetics, and so on.'

The homecomers feel that technological development has taken a wrong turn and needs to be directed. They seek time for stocktaking rather than accelerating development. The term homecomer has a religious connotation, and generally implies getting back to basic truths about humanity and the world. The philosopher Heidegger also used the concept of 'being-at-home' in the universe; this perhaps has affinity with the concept of homecomer in our discussion. The homecomer would go back to the sermon on the mount (see Schumacher 1993:145) or the *Sigālovāda sutta*. It would be superficial to say that the homecomers do not believe in progress; rather, they question what really constitutes progress. They say that ever greater size, ever greater speed and ever increasing violence is the opposite of progress.

There are unhealthy lifestyles nourished by a single-minded pursuit of wealth, an economy propelled by a frenzy of greed. There are false and destructive patterns of consumption. This aim of ever increasing

consumption intensifies people's greed. It is perhaps in this context that religion enters the scene. It is not religion in the sense of animism, magic, superstition, or even the mystical dimension of religion that is gaining relevance in the West, but the more humanistic and value-oriented base of religion that is coming back to life.

The place of religion in the Asian scene is far more complicated than it appears to be, and an aspect of it will be discussed in relation to Buddhism towards the last part of this chapter. There is, for instance, an author who says that 'When in India the income per head reaches that of the United States today, it may no longer produce saints like Vinobha Bhave. The world will be poorer as well as richer' (Zinkin 1963:7). Heroes, martyrs and saints emerge in a crisis, but a well-contented people with a balanced system of values is a worthwhile ideal.

The modernisation of traditional societies in Asia is a subject that should be examined with caution, wisdom and insight. What kind of technology should be introduced? What generates a healthy work ethic? Are there cultural and religious values that interfere with the motivation for economic achievement? Can existing religious values be mobilised for developmental work? Religion is interwoven with the daily life of the villager, and this fact is important, as it can facilitate social change as well as obstruct it.

Now that we have shown how religion impacts on the concept of 'progress', let us make a clear analysis of the nature of social progress.

Social progress and economic development

Social progress is today measured in terms of the progress made in the fields of health, education, nutrition, housing and justice, where ignorance, poverty, sickness, oppression and injustice are considered evils. How far have we achieved these basic requirements for a decent living?

At this point the problem of social progress is tied with economic development, and it will be quite apparent that economic development

is not an end in itself. The case has been made for an integrated concept of development. In general, the relationship between social progress and economic development has undergone a number of shifts:

- Social progress came in as an after-effect of emerging economic development rather than as a positive element in development. The evil effects of industrialisation have to be reduced by state intervention. Here the basic context of social progress is mainly curative.
- There is the examination of the possible social obstacles to development; here too the social is subordinate to the economic.
- The productivity of the social factor is recognised, and in terms of 'human capital', expenditure on social progress is considered an investment.
- A case is made for more balanced social and economic development, according to an integrated plan or policy.
- It has become necessary to place social progress in a wider context, going beyond economic activity to incorporate individuals, society, religion and nature (Kristofferson 1971).

Thus the social dimensions of economic activity are given due recognition, and economic activity cannot be divorced from the social, cultural and religious context.

Religions in a changing society—how is Buddhism placed?

Religion has to offer a perspective to help people act as social beings and deal with certain social situations. It is even said that if this is not done, religion will lose any relevance and value. It may be said that social action is often linked to a 'frame of orientation', a 'system of values' or an implicit religious base. A nation certainly needs a viable value system to sustain and direct her people in times of social crises as well as comparatively stable periods. Thus we can visualise a two-way relationship, where society has an impact on religion and religion has an impact on society. There are, however, those who say that religion is

an obstacle to social progress. So far we have only discussed certain dimensions in which the 'religious factor' enters the field of economic activity. Let us now examine the positive role of Buddhism in a changing society.

Some problems for discussion

Religions are 'other worldly'; how can Buddhism, which rejects or renounces the world, inspire social action?

The life of the monk is referred to as the 'homeless' life. For the householder, there is certainly a social ethos. There are some monks who have severed connections with society, but a large number are actively involved and engaged in social problems. Even those who completely renounce the world are basically driven by a sense of compassion for all beings, but that as part of their therapy, they are forced to go to the forests and seek seclusion. Of course, physical separation from society is no separation if craving lives within, which is referred to as a 'second mate within'.

Being other worldly is also connected with the belief in survival. There are those desiring a happy life in the next birth, and this could be a spur to lead a healthy social life. In general, the belief that we are going to be born again gives a wider sense of purpose and mission to life. It infuses a sense of the sacred into every moment. While the Buddha, for instance, discourages prolonged talk of 'being and becoming', belief in survival adds a unique dimension to life both in the social sphere and the religious sphere.

However, there is a doctrinal component that admonishes man to deal with the problem of suffering, with the urgency of a man whose 'turban is on fire'. This may be taken as a call to meditation and seclusion.

The doctrine of dukkha breeds pessimism and the doctrine of kamma teaches a sense of resignation. Where is the drive for work and reform of society?

It is not necessary that the doctrine of *dukkha* should produce a creed of pessimism. It is obvious that our commitments to life are not nullified by the inevitability of death (Apter 1967:268). Survival gives a wider significance to our passionate commitment to life, our passionate commitment to honesty and truthfulness.

All religions try to explain why we exist and to establish a standard of right and justice, at the same time scorning inequity and human cupidity. If anguish, hardships and suffering are all part of life, it is the function of religion to show that justice and meaning are positive corollaries of these (Apter 1967:269).

In general, the Buddha condemns any morbid or melancholy reactions to tragedy; he does not advocate insensitivity to the tragic by using drugs, sex and such diversions. A sense of equanimity and realism should help one to understand the cause and cure of suffering.

If the doctrine of *kamma* has produced a sense of resignation and a compromise with the inevitable, the Buddha never preached such a reaction to the moral order in the universe. The belief in free will and a moral law provides a basis for a vigorous moral and social life. If, in practice, Buddhism has made people pessimistic or inactive, these are not the natural implications of the doctrine. Ceaseless energy, self-effort and an ability to be the master of one's fate provide enough drive for a social reformer with a good cause.

How can a doctrine of 'egolessness' instil a drive for individual personality development or the building of a society?

There is no conflict between the doctrine of egolessness and a healthy drive for personality integration, social reform or even nation building. The doctrine of egolessness should cut across narrow feelings of selfishness, greed and avarice. A concern with one's own welfare should not blind one to the welfare of others.

According to the Buddha, the basic factor that separates people from one another is the spell of egoism, and once the barrier is broken, healthy human relations are possible. Erich Fromm says that it is the goal of all religions to overcome narcissism. It is only then that we can be open,

awake and fully related to others. This is certainly a very sound basis for the development of healthy and warm human relations.

It is true that in discussing the other virtues, the Buddha was more concerned with the life of renunciation, but if we examine the basic human relations analysed in the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, we discover a warm network of human relations centred on the family. Human relations of a purely symbiotic nature, or of dependence and domination, should be replaced by mature relationships. Pride, vanity, conceit, jealousy are unwholesome states that block the free flow of genuine concern, respect, love and understanding. Conceit (*māna*) creates artificial barriers between people.

For the development of co-operative efforts in group behaviour, narrow acquisitive pursuits and selfishness have to be eliminated. Thus the doctrine of 'egolessness' provides a basis for group living.

Can we deny that religions have bred superstition and in general have remained as bastions of conservatism?

The Buddha in general has advocated a critical attitude that goes against any form of superstition. It is possible that in the practice of Buddhism, elements of magic and superstition have crept into the lives of the Buddhists, but the doctrine itself is free from superstition.

The Buddha's teaching aimed to liberate people from wrong personality beliefs, and paved the way for social emancipation. K N Jayatilleke has dealt extensively with the Buddhist attitude towards caste, race and other social barriers, and says that the Buddha was one of the earliest religious teachers to preach the doctrine of human equality (see Jayatilleke 1969; Malalasekera and Jayatilleke 1958; Wijesekera 1952). The moral excellence of a person is the only basis for grouping people, and not birth, caste, colour or sex. Buddhism opened the doors of the religious life to all and thus certainly offers a basis for social harmony.

These are some of the issues that need discussion, and there are many more interesting problems related to the social role of Buddhism.

Conclusions

We have emphasised the evaluative overtones of the concept of progress. A critical examination of the predicament of the Western countries in the high tides of technology has shown that a time has come for stocktaking and to search for a new lifestyle. This context was presented with the notions of the 'forward stampeders' and 'homecomers'. It was also suggested that Asia need not make a blind headlong rush for the speed and gigantism of the West, but should proceed to develop technology and agriculture rooted in their own traditions. Against this background we considered the relevance of religious values. A basic claim of this chapter is that a drive for progress without a sense of contentment is a wild-goose chase. Finally, a specific examination of the place of Buddhism in a changing society was attempted. Religion has significant social dimensions, and social progress could be enriched and illuminated by a religious sense. In the words of Tolstoy, 'in every age, and in every human society, there exists a religious sense, common to the whole society, of what is good and what is bad' (Apter 1967:268). In the next chapters, an attempt will be made to examine in detail the social dimensions of Buddhism.

Buddhism and the social order

Religions today face three types of conflicts: conflicts between religions or the followers of different belief systems, conflicts between secular and non-secular approaches to problems, and internal conflicts about the weight given to the concepts and realms of discourse within each faith. The first type of conflict refers to the question of co-existence with other religions, and is not be discussed in this volume. This chapter will focus on the weight given to facets of the Buddhist doctrine in the attempt to discover a legitimate base for social involvement. The next chapter raises issues pertaining to the conflict between secular and non-secular approaches to social change, but the discussion is limited to points of conflict and convergence between Buddhism and Marxism. Thus follows an examination of Weberian claim that the *Theravāda* tradition has no basis for a social ethics, and we shall attempt to explain that this view can only gain acceptance by over-emphasising certain apparent dichotomies found within the doctrine of the Buddha, dichotomies or disjunctions between Nibbanic Buddhism and Kammic Buddhism, the contemplative and the active life, and the opposition between individual salvation and societal change.

Bridge building across the stream of Saṃsāra

Problems besetting religious involvement in society have been presented in the form of dichotomies that cannot be bridged. Some of these radical disjunctions have been the subject of discussion and controversy: the secular and the religious, transcendental and phenomenal, material and spiritual, this-worldly and other-worldly. These opposing terms are not equal; for instance, 'secular', 'phenomenal', 'material' and 'this-worldly' have different shades of meaning, and unless related to contexts and specific issues, can often turn out to be vacuous and devoid of clear meaning.

There are more specific oppositions, such as between worldly power (*ānācakka*) and the power of righteousness (*dhammacakka*) (Smith 1972:102), the disjunction between Nibbanic Buddhism and Kammic

Buddhism (see Spiro 1971), the distinction between the contemplative life and the active life (a theme well presented in the *Bhagavad Gita*), and the opposition between individual salvation and societal change. It is our contention that some of these apparent radical disjunctions can be bridged, and thus they need not interfere with Buddhist involvement in society.

Kammic Buddhism and Nibbanic Buddhism

...involvement in the world is more than religiously neutral, it is religiously perilous. Even moral behaviour is an obstacle to salvation, since it leads to the accumulation of merit and hence the continuation of *karma* and the cycle of rebirth. The true Buddhist is one who abandons all ties and attachments and wanders alone like the rhinoceros (Spiro 1971:427).

Spiro, who presents the gap between what he calls Nibbanic Buddhism and Kammic Buddhism, says that this gap cannot be bridged. In our attempt at 'bridge building', one such bridge across the stream of *samsāra* will be between Kammic and Nibbanic Buddhism.

In his work on *Buddhism and society*, Spiro (1971) quotes Weber:

For characterisation of the influence upon external behaviour of the Buddhist type of salvation the following is decisive. Assurance of one's state of salvation is not sought through proving one's self by an inner-worldly or extra-worldly action, by 'work' of any kind, but, in contrast to this, it is sought in a psychic state remote from activity. This is decisive for the location of the *arahant* ideal with respect to the 'world' of rational action. No bridge connects them. Nor is there any bridge to any actively conceptualised 'social' conduct.

Spiro, who has articulated the issue much more clearly than Max Weber, says that at no point do any of the doctrines of Nibbanic Buddhism articulate with the social order, either to give it value or provide a fulcrum by which it can be changed. Thus a Nibbanic Buddhist has no basis for social commitment, which obviously precludes any kind of commitment to social change. One could merely say according to this analysis that a Buddhist commitment to society is possible within

the doctrinal orientation of Kammic Buddhism. Spiro also says that in actual practice people 'see no contradiction' between commitment to society and upholding the nibbanic ideal. Since I am concentrating here on the implications of the doctrine, I am not discussing the question of the theory and practice of Buddhism in detail. The point is that this dramatic duality is merely an over-emphasis of the tension between two facets of the doctrine, and that there is no necessity to construct such a compartmentalised doctrine to provide for social commitment.

The concept of *kamma* is generally associated both in the popular mind and also among many scholars with a kind of judicial model of rewards and punishments. In the *Middle length sayings* for instance, it is said that people who kill living creatures, steal, resort to sexual misconduct and so on, will be born into a sorrowful state of existence; people who practise kindness to animals, who are merciful and compassionate, restrain themselves and guard their senses, will be born into a happy state or a heavenly world (M sutta 136). In this sense one's actions (*kamma*) cause the rebirth of beings and shape their destiny. Morally good actions on this model lead to the accumulation of merit, and to the continuation of the cycle of rebirth.

Here, we present another approach to the concept of *kamma*, which may be called the 'craftsmanship model' of *kamma*. This is the notion of *kamma* as a dispositional concept. Three different aspects of *kamma* may be distinguished:

- The deed as expressing the doer's will;
- The repeated deed as an expression of the doer's character;
- The deed as having certain consequences for the doer, accumulated and forming a deposit of the doer's merit and demerit (Davids and Stede 1952).

The concept of a deed as an expression of one's character throws light on the craftsmanship model of *kamma*. On the one hand, action reflects the agent's character, and on the other hand, repeated action increases the disposition to act in the same manner.

The phrase *Kammena samannagata* means endowed with the quality of acting in a certain manner, or being of a certain type of character. As we develop this notion we see that a person who kills gets hardened, and the dormant proclivity and latent disposition of anger (*patighānusaya*) is excited; the person who is greedy, hoards and envies the wealth of others is fed by the root (*mūla*) of greed (*lobha*). The person who kills, destroys and is of a violent nature is fed by the root of hatred (*dosa*).

The quest for *nibbāna* is basically the attempt to rid oneself of these unwholesome roots of greed, hatred and delusion. The building of a good society also calls for the elimination or the taming of the acquisitive instinct in people, and purely ego-oriented and selfish pursuits. When the notion of *kamma* is presented in this manner we can bridge the gap between Kammic Buddhism and Nibbanic Buddhism. The aspects may flow into each other, or form phases in the gradual development of the nibbanic quest. *Kamma* in this light has to be understood in relation to the building up of dispositions (*sankhāra*) and the excitement of dormant proclivities (*anusaya*). The greatest blessing of a good act is the building of a good character rather than the possible material effects it may bring in this life or in some other life.

Any attempt to isolate the doctrine of *kamma* from the Buddhist concept of the motivational roots and the dynamic dispositional traits of action is to ignore a very rich facet of Buddhism, its psychology and the concept of human nature (see de Silva 1973). There is also an analysis of the priority of *kamma*: weighty *kamma*, habitual *kamma*, death-proximate *kamma* and stored-up *kamma*. Habitual *kamma* (*āciñṇaka kamma*) is the idea that when a pattern of behaviour is followed continuously, it becomes second nature. Apart from merits and demerits, we speak of wholesome and unwholesome actions. And even more importantly, we speak of skillful and unskillful actions, a rendering of the word *kusala* which fits in with the craftsmanship model. A good person is like an accurate archer or a deft carpenter. The path to *nibbāna* is a gradual process based on the development of skills.

Individual salvation and societal change

Another dichotomy that has to be bridged is that between individual salvation and societal change. Max Weber (1958:213) presents the case: 'Salvation is an absolutely personal performance of the self-reliant individual. No-one, and particularly no social community can help him. The specific asocial character of genuine mysticism is here carried to its maximum.'

An approach to the development of the links between the individual and society has been pointed out in a Buddhist *sutta*. The *sutta* presents two basic ideas: protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself. Thus there need not be a fundamental conflict between the individual and society, and if there is a significant tension, it is not an unbridgeable dichotomy.

In contrast, Max Weber's position leads to an absolute dichotomy. On the one hand, there is the Buddhist seeking an absolute way out of suffering like the man whose turban is on fire. This person has cut off all social relations. Then there is the Buddhist who has forged a self-made compromise with life, and seeks the ideal of a good life in society. Is there no way of breaking through this disjunction?

Ven Nyanaponika has shown that one has to be vigilant if one wishes to protect others from harm, and that this can be done at three levels. At the material level, protecting one's own health will go far in protecting the health of others. At the ethical level, moral self-protection will safeguard others; it is the best way of safeguarding individuals and society in general from our own passions and selfish impulses. 'If we permit that the Three Roots of everything evil, Greed, Hatred and Delusion, take a firm hold in our hearts, then that which grows from those evil roots will spread far and wide like a jungle creeper and suffocate much health and noble growth all around' (Nyanaponika 1967:5-6). The bad effects of greed and hatred are not limited to cases where people become the victims and passive recipients of these impulses. If we are dominated by craving, the obsession to collect,

hoard, possess and cling on to things, we excite the same tendencies in others.

Emotions like greed, envy, jealousy, pride, fear and anxiety all derive a significance from an interpersonal context, but if we begin within ourselves we do not spread the seeds of jealousy and envy. 'If we leave untouched the actual or potential sources of social evil within ourselves, any external social activity of ours will be either futile or glaringly incomplete' (Nyanaponika 1967:8).

At the meditative level, moral practice is cemented by a more lasting and stable base. Repeated moral practice must be firm and deep. If a nation fails to understand the social value of a meditative life, spiritual decay will set in and will not be conducive to the growth of a stable society.

The relationship between the individual and society has been presented by Weber as the source of another dilemma: 'How is a sense of social responsibility resting on a social ethic possible within a framework of a doctrine which considers the ego as "a grand and pernicious basic illusion"'? (Weber 1958:213). There is no conflict between the doctrine of egolessness and a healthy drive for personality integration, social reform or even nation building. The doctrine of egolessness (*anattā*) cuts across the barriers of selfishness, greed and avarice. Egoism is a factor that separates people, and once this barrier is broken, healthy relations are possible. It is only by breaking this barrier of egoism that one can be 'open, awake and fully related to others' (Fromm 1965). When discussing other regarding virtues the Buddha had in mind a comprehensive framework for renunciation—that it is made in the name of humanity. Even within the framework of society, the network of warm human relations depicted in the homily to Sigāla contains the central ideas for a social ethos. Human relations based on a purely symbiotic nature, or dependence and domination, should be replaced by mature relationships. Pride, vanity, conceit and jealousy are unwholesome states that block the free flow of genuine concern, respect, love and understanding. The doctrine of egolessness in this sense certainly provides an admirable base for group living.

The contemplative life and the active life

Another dichotomy emerging from the tensions presented above is the conflict between the contemplative life and the active life. The distinction between the way of action (*Karma mārga*) and the way of knowledge (*jñāna mārga*) is a significant distinction in the Indian philosophical tradition and is highlighted in works like the *Bhagavad Gita*. As part of the therapy, the meditative life demands a certain amount of seclusion.

Out of all the dichotomies presented, this in my opinion is the most powerful, as it is related to the efficacy of a certain technique necessary for the attainment of enlightenment. A few points can be made about the way to reduce this conflict. The conflict between action and inaction is riddled with semantic issues that cannot be pursued here. The meditative life is not a life of inaction; rather, it is a vigilant dimension of experience that demands continuous attention and awareness, the training of one's senses and a keen sensitivity for behavioural situations that might excite unskillful thought and action. It is not an escape from the human predicament but an attempt to master it.

Another significant point is that *upekkha* means not detached neutrality or negative uninvolvedness, but equanimity through non-attachment, rather than non-involvement (Smith 1972:86). Involvement in social situations is possible without any attachment. On the other hand, even a person who lives in society may live without going beyond the work of machine, like the one who punches tickets from morn till night. To live in society within the ambit of mechanical, monotonous and semi-human conditions is to betray the finest aspect of humanity.

Leading a partially contemplative life always enriches social activity, giving it depth, quality and meaning. Even if it is difficult to combine such apparently unrelated activities as turning a wheel in a machine and practising mindfulness, the contemplative component should enter the life of a person who desires to lead a full life. As was mentioned earlier, a nation that loses sight of the social value of the meditative life is on the brink of spiritual decay. There are also saints like Gandhi who

have attempted to combine the finest aspect of the contemplative and the active life; these ideas are raised in the spirit of creative inquiry rather than dogmatic conclusion. New perspectives for looking at the human predicament are necessary.

Spiritual and material progress

Today, there are millions of hungry people in under-developed countries fighting for a decent living and a square meal. Without genuine economic growth, there can be no progress for them. The situation is equally problematic in some of the developed countries, where dreams of progress are combined with destruction, tremendous economic inequalities, a drive for industrialisation, crime and delinquency, suicide and mental illness. The social setting has become highly complicated, and a sense of rootlessness has set in; workers suffer the impact of automation, while villagers and peasants are alienated by the drift to the towns. In towns there is a sense of anonymity. When one part of the world is thus concerned with non-material goods—'peace of mind, human dignity, cultural values, ethos ...' (Calder 1968)—others are lacking the basic requirements for a decent living.

Thus, if we glance at the world in this general way, it is obvious that those who are searching for non-material values are searching for a framework of orientation that religions like Buddhism could offer. Where poverty dominates, Marxism casts a tremendous spell. The situation is not so simple, as even amidst the poor, there are varying grades of poverty, and varying patterns of spirituality. Even the poor are sometimes baffled by questions: Why poverty? Why sickness and death? What are the values by which man should live?

While science and technology provide us with a dimension for human progress, religious and cultural values can give form and direction to it, and provide a continuous self-criticism of the ongoing process of change. A Buddhist will not make a blind commitment to any form of social change. To uphold a concept of progress without grasping the nature of human contentment precludes a balanced sense of human values (see de Silva 1974a). Even if there are two worlds—one in the

height of technological development and the other struggling with questions of food, clothing and shelter—we believe that evolving a lifestyle common to both worlds is possible. It is a lifestyle where social progress will be enriched by a religious sense.

The relationship between material and spiritual progress has been discussed broadly without specific reference to Buddhism. But for the predicament discussed here, Buddhism has significant value orientations.

Our attempt to focus interest on the four dichotomies cited above calls for a genuine grappling with the question of, how one can combine the quest for *nibbāna* with the urge for social commitment? A pronouncement to the effect that Buddhism does not neglect society is not enough. If these dichotomies are not honestly presented, a Buddhist will have a kind of split personality. The need for authentic integration of the religious personality is a problem that precedes the logic of the commitment to social change.

Human nature in Marxism and Buddhism

The problem of mass poverty is the area where religions encounter the challenge of Marxism. The increasing tensions in the economic field have brought Marxism to the centre of social action and intellectual discussion. Where do Marxism and Buddhism meet?

When Marx attacked the question of human poverty, was he merely making a case for the satisfaction of the basic human needs—the needs for fresh air, food, clothing, shelter and sex? If Marx merely limited his analysis to the satisfaction of these basic needs, one is justified in upholding the oft repeated vulgarisation of Marx, that ‘Man is what he eats’. Firstly, hunger to Marx was not merely a metabolic state of deprivation, but rather a ‘condition of deprivation imposed by other men’, and he condemned the capitalist system for its impact on people (Zeitlin 1997:84–85).

Marx condemned the system that made the worker a ‘beast of burden’, reduced to the strictly bodily needs, and tedious, mechanical and repetitive work. Marx believed in a full life, and in criticising the capitalist society he had hopes of building a new society, a truly human society. This facet in Marx, his basic humanism, has been lost to the world for a number of reasons:

- Marx’s contribution to the concept of human nature (psychology) has been neglected. Marx is supposed to have been much concerned not with the individual, but only with the laws of society and its evolution. The image of humanity behind Marx’s analysis of social change has not been given due weight.
- Marx never put his psychological views in systematic form; they are dispersed in his writings.
- There is the oversimplified view of Marx as a person only concerned with economic phenomena. But money is surely not a fetish to be worshipped as a symbol: it is the means to lead a full life.

Marx made a distinction between fixed or constant drives and relative drives (Fromm 1971:64). Constant drives exist under all conditions and can be changed by social conditions only in form and direction. Relative drives owe their origin to a certain type of social organisation. Marx assumed sex and hunger to be 'fixed drives'; avarice would be an instance of a relative drive. Another significant point in Marx's analysis (very much appreciated by Fromm) is the animal and the human qualities of constant drives: '...eating, drinking and procreating are, of course, also genuine human functions. But abstractly considered, apart from the other human activities, and turned into final and sole ends, they are animal functions' (Fromm 1971:65). If people do not actively relate themselves to other people and nature, they lose themselves, and become crippled, fragmented and sick. Marx speaks of alienated passions, which are satisfied as ends in themselves, not for the whole human being. Marx's concept of alienation is one of the most humane aspects in his entire work. Marx also refers to people's synthetic, inhuman and artificial needs. While condemning the purely animal level of existence, he also condemns the other extreme of artificial and imaginary needs. A basic criticism of the capitalist society is that it nourishes and lives on passions like greed (which is a substitute for a lack of love and aliveness), and more specifically acquisitiveness, avarice and self-indulgence.

This picture of the human predicament is one that has a significant echo in Buddhist works, and here is perhaps a base for the development of a lifestyle that will bring out the best in the secular and non-secular approaches to the problems of society. However, in the turbid and agitated tempo of social change, these original images of man and human nature are lost, and the drive for social change is caught up in the most inhuman welter of passions. A theory of social change with a comprehensive theory of human nature and a vision of humanity is something we badly need today.

Marx, in assuming the existence of human nature, said that it is not something we generally see, because what we observe are the specific manifestations of human nature in various cultures and specific historical epochs. However, it is possible to infer from this a concept of human

nature in general and the laws governing it. Differing economic conditions can stimulate different psychological impulses and motives. One economic system can lead to the formation of ascetic tendencies, another to the desire to save and hoard, and yet another to spend and consume at an ever-increasing rate (Fromm 1962a:41). The realm of human drives forms a sub-structure of the social process, and theories of social change should not neglect this aspect.

Human nature in Buddhism

The finest point at which a confrontation between Buddhism and Marxism could be initiated is their basic concern with the common humanism. It is necessary to focus our inquiry on this factor, as it is said that Marxism is 'scientific socialism', an analysis of the process of social change and a broad-based prediction regarding the future patterns of change, while Buddhism deals with the phenomenon of suffering (*dukkha*), and is a way out of it. So it is said that they deal with two completely different types of issues and do not have any basic concerns in common.

If Marx had not been struck by the suffering humanity, his writings would not have received their due share in the galleries of academic philosophy, and would have been lost in the limbo of human memories. He in fact said that philosophers had only attempted to interpret the world, but his aim was to change the world. The practical transformation of man and society was a common concern of Marx and the Buddha. Marx was also concerned with suffering, not merely the question of poverty, but the meaning of poverty. Poverty is not merely the lack of food and clothing; it means that man does not lead a full life. In the words of Erich Fromm, who has done much to unravel the humanism of Marx:

...from his concept of man follow certain ideas about human pathology and about human health. As the main manifestations of psychic pathology, Marx speaks of the crippled and alienated man; as the main manifestation of psychic health, he speaks of the active, productive, independent man (Fromm 1971:67-68).

The common view that Marx is concerned with material suffering and Buddhism with both material and spiritual suffering is rather a stereotyped notion that conceals some of the complexities of Marx. The Marxist concepts of acquisitiveness and greed, possessiveness, exploitation are precisely the kinds of human traits condemned by the Buddha.

It has been remarked that 'Buddhism does not hinder the emergence of modern capitalist values, though it does not suggest them' (Evers 1973:161). There are certain doctrinal components of Buddhism that could be accepted, and exist within a capitalist society: the case for individual initiative; the obtaining of wealth by just means; and the sensible spending of it for a comfortable living, for charity and helping others. The Buddha specifically refers to the 'wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of arm, won by sweat, lawful and lawfully gotten...' (A ii:67).

But if the capitalist societies have to feed on the acquisitive human drives—greed, the inordinate ambition to amass wealth, to hoard and possess—a Buddhist society would not uphold such a personality as either desirable or inevitable. An excessive domination of the personality by greed, for money, power, sex, or whatever, leads to self-alienation. Because of greed, one develops attachments and obsessions that are overpowering, cripple the personality and lead to self-alienation. When a person's life is dominated by a partial striving, whether it be for money, power or sex, there we find a crippled and unproductive personality (see de Silva 1976b). Apart from self-alienation, the Buddhist analysis of craving can be extended to understand the alienation of an individual from others. Marx, for instance, says that egoism is the basic factor that brings about this alienation. In an acquisitive society that nourishes the ego, with the emphasis on the accumulation of wealth, property and status symbols, human relations become mechanical. It can even take a destructive turn where competition turns into antagonism and mutual hatred.

It is at this point that the Buddhist doctrine of humanism, the doctrine of compassion, with its emphasis on love, charity and mutual respect, can eliminate the conditions that bring about alienation. While Marx

believed that this can be done by changing the economic set-up that fosters acquisition and greed, other forms of psychological changes within the individual are necessary.

A socialist society is often associated with the idea of sharing and the replacement of selfish interest by healthy group ideals. This again is a value that runs through the social ethics of Buddhism. On the other hand, if socialism breeds hatred and conflict, a Buddhist does not hope to build a society by generating group antagonism, hatred and conflict. A Buddhist would also insist that no political experiments would succeed unless they are based on the human qualities of integrity, honesty and truthfulness. There must be an organic relationship between the wheel of power (*ānācakka*) and the wheel of righteousness (*dhammacakka*).

Though in some of these respects Buddhism goes beyond Marxism, a Buddhist can agree with Marx concerning some of the central evils in the capitalist system, mainly the nourishing of human greed and acquisitiveness. While the Marxist would mainly point to the changing of the economic system and the Buddhist to the transformation of the individual, a closer study of Marx's concept of human nature as cited above (specially as developed by Erich Fromm) brings it close to the Buddhist analysis.

The Buddha traces unskilled actions to the roots of greed, hatred and delusion. No social progress is possible without the gradual taming or even eradication of these roots. Greed (*lobha*) has two manifestations: *kāma taṇhā* (craving for sensuous gratification), and *bhava taṇhā* (craving for self-preservation). Hatred (*dosa*) manifests itself in varied types of aggression and ultimately issues forth as *Vibhava-taṇhā* (craving for annihilation). Delusion (*moha*) is the primary root of evil that prevents man from seeing the true nature of things. A study of the three forms of craving in relation to Marx should prove to be a very fruitful project. *Kāma* in general implies the drive for sense-gratification by the five senses. There is also the term *vatthu-kāma*, which apart from the direct objects of the senses (sounds, tastes and so on) also refers to such assets as clothes, servants, goats, pigs, fields and land. When the concept is extended in this manner, it would not be limited to

sense gratification as such, but imply aspects of self-preservation, need for security, wealth and so on. These may be considered as the conditions necessary for sensuous gratification. *Bhava taṇhā* arises with a false conception of personality, based on the existence of a permanent ego. The ego is not merely an intellectual construction, but fed by deeper processes like the desire for power, the acquisitive drive, and the self-preservative drive. Attachment to the ego generates both personal anxieties and group conflicts. The drive for self-annihilation arises from the root hatred (*dosa*) and is generally related to human aggression.

An attempt is made to present our analysis in this form because the problem of 'egoism' has received much attention in encounters between religions and Marxism. The only way to build a healthy interpersonal orientation is to break through the 'spell of egoism' (de Silva 1974b). Erich Fromm says that the essential teaching of all great religions is an idea that can be summarised in one sentence: It is the goal of man to overcome one's narcissism. Perhaps this principle is nowhere expressed more radically than in Buddhism' (de Silva 1974b). It is only by shedding these egoistic proclivities that people can be awake, open and fully related to others. A most stimulating idea on similar lines was presented in a Buddhist-Christian encounter. It was mentioned that underlying the many differences that distinguish the many religions, 'there is a common value which they all accept...', and that is the 'non-attachment to the "self"' (Jayaweera 1973). Here is an interesting converging point for dialogue among Christians, Marxists and people of other faiths.

Our only critical observation with this attempt by Neville Jayaweera is the rather over-near distinction of a capitalist society depending on people's selfish, individualistic and grasping nature and a socialist society calling for the noble qualities of sharing, giving and caring for others. While this is an extremely interesting idea, it might submerge some of the more complicated factors relating to human psychology, and a great amount of serious research will be needed before we overcome the spell of its structural neatness and accept it on the basis of reasonable evidence.

Historically, while capitalist societies have nourished the acquisitive personality, within the same system there existed people with a healthy 'achievement motive' (McClelland 1961), caring for others and performing a wide array of other regarding virtues. Also, it has become quite apparent that the mere pronouncement of socialist ideas does not prevent the subtle working of egoistic pursuits and the drive for power. While certain social structures might discourage selfish pursuits, egoism is like the seven-headed hydra, emerging in new and novel ways, at each attempt to prevent it putting out its head.

Marxist and Buddhist commitment to social change

Marxists are concerned to show the crucial role of economic forces in the dynamics of social change (McLeish 1967). 'They seem to be concerned with 'History' and 'Society', rather than with local changes and particular human groups which could provide a scientifically-based test of the theory' (McLeish 1967:1). According to the extreme generality of their thesis, the driving force of change is located in the economic basis of a society. Economic changes are primary, and it is the productive forces that determine things like culture, knowledge and ideology. Changes take place according to laws of a causal, determined character. Conflict and struggle (especially 'class struggle') can be regarded as the vehicles of social innovation. Successful innovators will have the 'forces of history' on their side (McLeish 1967:5). The basic contradictions they have to look out for are

- contradictions between the productive forces and productive relations;
- contradictions between the economic basis and the ideological superstructure;
- contradictions that may exist between the superstructure itself.

This law of contradiction operates within the sphere of human thinking, thus providing us with another field of investigation. This process of the conflict of contradictions forming a new synthesis that again forms a thesis of another contradiction has been referred to as a

'dialectical process'. This is the theoretical structure on which Marxists make their commitment to social change. Any commitment to social change should fall in line with the laws of social development.

The Buddhist commitment to social change is not a commitment to 'mere social change', it is a commitment to certain kinds of social change; it is a commitment to the direction of social change. The nature and direction of social change have to be examined in the light of Buddhist values. Thus, the commitment to social change takes the form of a question of values. It is not a question of merely 'flowing with the tide', but making a critical commitment according to the values one upholds. One should not merely be a creature of social change but a creator too. As Bardwell Smith (1972:103) points out, the identifying of mere change with progress is un-Buddhistic, change itself is ambiguous, and one should have reservations regarding change.

The Marxist values are centred on the social changes or what they call 'social reality', and it seems that one has to adjust one's system of values so that it will conform to the impending changes. Does this mean that any change is a change for the better? (Popper 1965:34).

The Marxist says that social phenomena have to be studied in historical perspective. History is not a mere chronicle of events; it looks not only at the past but also towards the future. The Marxist study of history concentrates on the study of the laws of social development. Thus a Marxist sociologist is basically interested in attempting to find the broad trends in accordance with which social structures change. Scientific economics only 'attempts to lay bare the economic laws of the motion of human society'. Karl Popper raises the significant question: 'If so, where is the provision for Marx's famous claim that the philosophers interpret the world, but they aim at changing it?' 'The activist exhortation' in Marxism, according to Popper, is limited to 'social midwifery' (Popper 1965:49). Thus the morally good is what falls in line with historical reality: it is what is ahead of time, 'conforming to such standards as may be adopted in the future'. Popper says this creates the well-known 'oedipus effect' (Popper 1965:15), that one can be influenced by prediction and thus act according to it. Does this not

restrict one's options for commitment? Authentic commitment and decisions are possible in the light of real alternatives, and not pseudo-alternatives.

Thus there is a significant difference between Buddhism and Marxism regarding the relationship of values to social commitment. While a Buddhist could give a certain kind of emphasis to the various aspects of the doctrine, or present ideas in a 'modern garb', depending on the changing social environment, there is no attempt to derive values in the light of what Marxists call 'social reality'.

Buddhism accepts change and flux as a part of the nature of things. It is also said that the laws are not haphazard. These laws pertain to the natural world as well as to the psychological and social. But they may be described as 'non-deterministic social correlations'. Buddhism accepts both ideas or ideologies and economic features as factors affecting the course of society. No doubt, it gives a pre-eminent place to ideas as well as emotions, but the impact of the material and social environment is also recognised. For instance, in the *Digha Nikāya*, the Buddha refers to three significant factors affecting society—the psychological factor of craving, the economic factor of hunger and the natural bodily proclivity to sickness (McLeish 1967).

Within such a dynamic setting, where a multiplicity of factors play a part, the Buddhist analysis of mind and motivation takes a pre-eminent place. Thus any attempt to transform society purely by changing the social structures would be to build a society on shifting sands. The Buddhist case for radical change has to take into account both the individual and the social context. Mere doctrinaire declarations are to no avail, unless there is a genuine transformation of the individual. Sometimes the good example of a few individuals can be infectious. Social structures often become anachronistic when there is a lack of authenticity in the individuals. Desirable social changes could be effected by a process of education, and not merely by discipline imposed from outside. In general, no theory of social change is complete unless it rests on a theory of social psychology as well as individual psychology. Thus, in this debate between Buddhism and Marxism on the

commitment to social change, Marxism emphasises the analysis of the laws of social development, and Buddhism emphasises the need for a concept of values and a theory of humanity and human psychology. A point at which both Marxism and Buddhism meet would be the process of interaction between the individual and society.

There are a number of other issues that have been raised by both admirers and critics of Marxism, and the subject of this chapter does not permit us to discuss these in detail. The claim that the economic basis will in the long run assert its influence leads to a rather indefinite formulation: 'everything happens because it is necessary, if it does not happen it is proof that it was not necessary' (McLeish 1967).

The significance and the values of individual actions are lost in the massive resolution of forces. If individuals are caught up in the irresistible historical tendencies, which surge on like a tide, individual decisions and commitments are trivial and insignificant. The built-in resistance to change, and the desire to plan and originate new vistas of change have significant variables rooted in individual psychology. How do people who have been nourished within the confines of certain class interest become the voice of liberating movements? How do deep anti-social attitudes, rooted in personal histories of individuals, resist social habituation and education? These are significant questions. Marxism is characterised by a 'strong tendency towards highly generalised predictions on a grand scale' (McLeish 1967). Unless this is backed by intensive, disinterested and scientific studies of small-scale social changes in limited contexts, the Marxist theory of social change would fall in line with platitudes without any possibility of verification even to a limited extent.

Radical change, revolution and violence

Apart from the analysis of social change, the means used to effect social change are important. Social change is often effected by certain forms of legitimate social control, ranging from custom and public opinion to law, education and morality. But radical changes in the social structure demand radical techniques. The Marxists who are basically

concerned with the problems of human poverty, exploitation and basic social justice, claim that a radical and fundamental change in the economic structure is necessary. They also believe that capitalist interest will always raise its head and if persuasion fails, the resort to force can be justified. Use of force implies that in the various phases of the revolutionary struggle diverse types and gradations of violence will emerge.

The Buddhist position regarding violence is generally discussed in relation to war rather than revolution, and generally a Buddhist finds it difficult to justify the use of violence. However, in running a state, at least in dealing with criminals, a certain amount of force has to be used. But the fact that a little amount of force may do some good does not mean that more force would bring more good.

It is unfortunate that most of the available discussions on Buddhism and violence have been done only in terms of the 'moral categories' in which violence can be placed. We wish to make a plea to present this in terms of a 'diagnostic category'. We are not merely concerned with the condemnation of violence, but an understanding of it, and to discover rational ways of counteracting violence. The image that comes to one's mind is not of the Buddha as a lawgiver, but of the Buddha as a physician.

First let us briefly consider the Buddhist attitude to war. The Buddha has generally condemned war as a means of settling disputes, and was critical of the traditions that upheld the possibility of disinterested war, or war as a duty (M i:86-87). It is due to passion and desire that kings dispute with kings. It is difficult to make a case for a 'just war'. The Buddha also says that one who does not express anger to the angry wins a difficult war (S i:86-87). The perennial message of the Buddha is embedded in this line from the *Dhammapada*: 'Hatred does not cease by hatred—hatred ceases by love: this is the eternal law' (Dh:5).

The Buddha's actual intervention during the war between the Koliyas and Sakyas conveys his attitude in the most practical way. Violence creates further violence, and it creates sorrow both for the vanquished and the victor.

Leaving the moral abhorrence and the futility of violence, why do such conflicts emerge? This diagnostic attitude may be related to ideological conflicts that generate revolutionary struggles. Though the Buddha made his preachings against the background of kings and their empires, he did reflect on the kind of ideological conflicts that figure prominently in the troubled mirrors of our world. People cling tenaciously to their respective ideologies, holding 'here alone is the truth' (see Sn). There is some element of truth in most of the ideologies and facets of falsity; some contain more truth than others. But ideological conflicts cannot be settled by violence. One should find rational ways of settling disputes.

Apart from the ideological level, another dimension in which violence can be examined in the diagnostic way is to study the psychology and the sociology of violence. A comparative study of the Freudian concept of the death instinct and the roots of aggression in Buddhism has been attempted (de Silva 1973), and this kind of work has much relevance to the diagnostic approach to the question of violence. Work on the sociology of violence in a Buddhist perspective has yet to be done. The desire for power, the greed for possessions, the unsatisfied desires that generate conflicts and hatred are questions on which the psychology of Buddhism offers significant and relevant insights.

Both war and peace emerge in the mind, and we should begin here, and then study the kind of violence embedded in our institutions. There is a significant amount of work being done on the sociology of violence, the social psychology of mass movements and the sociology of revolution.

The logic and the morals of those who join mass movements get enmeshed in a number of other factors (conscious and unconscious): there is the possibility of sudden change, the craving for excitement, the diversion from boredom; there is a tendency to identify with heroes who may either magnify their egotism or voice their genuine grievances; there is the desire for anonymity, and the passion for gambling. Various types of people find confusion an interesting situation.

We certainly do not say that this is all that you find in mass movements. There is the fervent hope for a just social order, the impatient demand for a radical attempt to remove human poverty, the instinctive feeling that every man has a right to a wide array of confusing factors beyond the control of the most skilful leader.

Violence is defined in legal contexts as the 'illegitimate use of force', but in a diagnostic setting, it is basically a breakdown in communication. It is the inability to consider the other as a person, a human being. The taming of violence cannot be done merely by courts, the police or even by politics. Apart from a system of values, a community has to build new myths and symbols, even a sense of humour, speech and gestures—by which a society can be created without violence (see Perry 1970). This we presume is a vision not limited to the Buddhist alone.

Summing up

In the course of our discussions, some points of similarity between the humanistic outlook of Marxism and Buddhism were discussed: our analysis was focussed on human greed and acquisitiveness, exploitation, the basic claim that a person should lead a full life rather than end up as a crippled, fragmented and sick human being. It was also seen that in the analysis of social change, while Marxism emphasises the economic factors rather than ideas, Buddhism considers both the ideological and economic factors as important. The Buddha has quite clearly shown that a mere change of the economic and social structures is no guarantee of the psychological transformation of the individual.

In planning and directing social change, Buddhism has a wider framework for creative thinking, whereas Marxism is tied to social midwifery. Regarding the techniques used for effecting social change, Marxism advocates violence if peaceful techniques fail. While the idea that the 'end justifies the means' is the guideline of the Marxist, the Buddhist finds it difficult to justify the use of violence. Change and flux, and the presence of an inner dynamism of change within social phenomena are clearly accepted by the Buddha. But the Buddhist causal analysis of social phenomena does not imply any theory of historical or economic determinism.

In discussing these points of convergence and divergence between Buddhism and Marxism, we have deliberately not discussed the Marxist materialist metaphysics (Theory of Reality). Now that we have completed our analysis of man and social change, it would be necessary to remind ourselves that at the basis of some of the fundamental differences between Buddhism and Marxism lies the claim that Marxism is essentially a variety of materialism. The basic reality for Marx is matter in motion. The organic world, the world of animals and people is a product of the combination of subtle material particles and has taken its present form by a gradual process of evolution. Buddhism accepts both the reality of material and the ideational phenomena. Buddhism is not a kind of materialism. This means that while Buddhism accepts survival, Marxism does not. Further, within the framework of historical and economic determinism, there is no viable concept of free will in Marxism. Finally, both Buddhism and Marxism accept reason and experience, while extra-sensory perception as a valid means of knowledge is accepted in Buddhism alone. Thus we see some clear differences in metaphysics, ethics and the theory of knowledge. In the light of our analysis, it may be said that while the humanism of Marxism brings it closer to Buddhism, the materialism of Marx throws into relief some line of divergence between Buddhism and Marxism.

The tragic sense of life

According to Sidney Hook (1970), the three factors that made the Buddha renounce the world were sickness, old age and death. Hook also says that these realities are not fundamental to the tragic sense of life. The term refers to 'a genuine experience of moral doubt and perplexity', which issues out of a conflict of moral ideals. Thus, there are conflicts between the good and the right and between the right and the right.

Hook theorises that with the development of scientific medicine the most serious forms of sickness will disappear and will not be replaced by others. Even where sickness is present it may be the occasion of tragedy but by itself not an illustration of it. In relation to the forces of nature, human plight may appear to be pitiful but not tragic. The harmful effect of ageing is also a matter for scientific medicine. There is no tragedy in growing old biologically, only sorrow.

But what of death—Buddha's third appalling discovery—preoccupation with which has become so fashionable today among some European existentialist philosophers that their philosophy seems to be more a meditation upon death than upon life. Is not death the ultimate source of whatever is tragic in life? I cannot bring myself to think so. Nor can I convince myself that its nature and significance in life waited to be discovered by Kierkegaard and Heidegger and their modern disciples... It is the reflective attitude towards death not the popular attitude or the one displayed by those in its last agonies, which throws light on its nature and place in life. The attitude exhibited by Socrates in facing it seems wiser than that expressed by the contemners of the rational life... (Hook 1970).

Hook also refers to Tolstoy's claim that if a man has learnt to think he must think of his own death, and to Sartre's statement that 'if we must die then life has no meaning'. All this appears to Hook as 'little more than a fear of death and a craving for immortality'. He also says that death has its uses, for it gives us an assurance that no evil will last forever. He concludes that 'death as such is not tragic'.

All this brings him to his own positive solution. There are three approaches to the tragic conflicts of life: the approach of history, typified by Hegel; the approach of love; and the method of creative intelligence (the pragmatic method). Hook rejects the first as unsatisfactory, rejects the second as incomplete and ambiguous, and supports the third. In the light of his own method, he finds the Buddhist attitude unsatisfactory. He says that the Buddhist saint, who out of compassion refuses to use force or to kill when they are the only methods available, leaves room for greater evil. Thus he refuses to accept what he calls the 'Christian and especially the Buddhist ethics of purity'.

The concept of *dukkha*

There are a number of objections that can be made to Hook's analysis of the Buddhist concept of suffering. Firstly, what is referred to as the truth of suffering is not limited to sickness, old age and death; it is a wider formula with a very broad frame of reference. Secondly, it has to be understood as one of the four noble truths and not in isolation. The four noble truths form the basis of Buddhist doctrine. They are the truth of suffering, the origin of suffering, the extinction of suffering and the eight-fold path leading to the extinction of suffering. It is only when the four truths are taken as aspects of a unified doctrine that factors like moral perplexity and emotional fears can be explained. One who emphasises the factor of suffering only is in danger of embracing philosophical positions like nihilism and pessimism. As will be explained later, Buddhism does not uphold such extremes.

Thirdly, the concept of suffering has to be understood in relation to the doctrines of impermanence (*anicca*) and egolessness (*anattā*). Hook distorts the meaning of *dukkha* as he isolates the concept of suffering from the surroundings that give it meaning. Lastly, his attempt to project the Buddhist concept of suffering (as he sees it) against the background of his own definition of 'tragic' is misleading.

What is the truth of suffering? Birth (*jāti*), decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhi*), death (*maraṇa*), sorrow (*soka*), lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*), grief (*domanassa*) and despair (*upāyāsa*) are referred to as

suffering. To be joined with the unpleasant, to be separated from the pleasant, and the failure to get what one wants is suffering. In short, suffering (*dukkha*) is the result of clinging to the five groups of mental and physical qualities that make up the individual (D 2 xxii:18).

In translating the Pali word *dukkha*, it is not possible to find one simple word that will compress all the aspects of its meaning. Starting with specific and concrete instances of physical pain and bodily ailments we discern a broadening group of more abstract meanings: mental sorrow, frustration, conflict, tension, insecurity, anxiety, despair and restlessness. Then we come to even broader concepts like unsatisfactoriness, disharmony, emptiness and insubstantiality. Horner recommends the word 'anguish', but gives a warning that the word may be too strong. 'But where it has been used the stress appears to be wanted more on the mental than on the physical disease; where physical disease is more clearly intended, I have used other words.' The word *dukkha* etymologically suggests the idea of an evil hollow, 'the empty of that which should rightly fill, and which be perhaps taken as *nibbāna*' (M Tr 1:22). The empty hollow ground around which human misery is woven is the belief in a non-existent ego. Here the doctrine of *dukkha* has to be understood in relation to the doctrine of *anattā*. This aspect of the meaning of *dukkha* has attracted the attention of scholars like Conze, whose observations strengthen the claim that the Buddha did not merely deal with some superficial aspect of suffering, but with 'basic or original anxiety'. Conze (1951:22-23) says, 'According to the views elaborated by Scheler, Freud, Heidegger and Jaspers, there is in the core of our being a basic anxiety, a little empty hole from which all other forms of anxiety and unease draw their strength.' These references to anxiety, according to Conze, 'have quite a Buddhist ring about them'.

In general the word *dukkha* has three broad usages—a general philosophical sense, a narrower psychological sense and a still narrower physical sense (Wijesekera 1960). It is in this general philosophical sense that words like 'unsatisfactoriness' and 'disharmony' have been suggested. This meaning becomes prominent when *dukkha* is considered as a universal characteristic of all *samsāric* existence, along with impermanence and egolessness. Thus it is said, 'What is impermanent

(*aniccam*), that is suffering (*dukkha*). What is suffering, that is void of an ego (*anattā*)' (S iv:1).

Physical pain is easy to recognise, though it is inevitably mixed with the mental. The Pali scriptures make a distinction between bodily disagreeable feeling and mentally disagreeable feeling. The mentally disturbing can range from mild irritation to the most tragic forms of despair. When Hook remarks that with the development of scientific medicine the most serious forms of sickness will disappear, he fails to give some thought to the fact that increasing numbers fall a prey to mental sickness today. This certainly has been tackled by the psychoanalyst to a point. There are on the one hand remarkable anticipations of modern psychoanalysis in Buddhism, while on the other the factor of regression and the re-emergence of neurotic features that baffled Freud can be accounted for in the light of Buddhism (De Silva, M 1967).

In fact, Freud says that all people are at least partially neurotic. The Buddha also says that we suffer from bodily disease from time to time but that mental disease is continual till the holy state of *arahant* is attained. Even Freud, in spite of his excessive biological orientation, at times suggests that the very nature of an instinct is such that no response is wholly adequate to it. The failure of response can be traced, not merely to societal rigidities, but further back to the ambivalent structure of instinct itself (De Silva, M 1966). If this interpretation of Freud is correct, we discern a close echo of the Buddhist concept of *taṇhā*.

People are basically restless according to the Buddha, as they are continually nourished by three types of craving: the craving for sense gratification (*kāma taṇhā*); the desire for selfish pursuits (*bhava taṇhā*); and the craving for annihilation (*vibhava taṇhā*). This craving is considered the origin of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya*). This constant searching for temporary satisfaction, now here, now there, is ever renewing itself. When boredom breaks in one direction, it turns for variegated and novel forms of satisfaction in some other direction. When obstruction of desires sets in, people become angry, aggressive and discontented. When society frowns on them, they retreat to castles of pleasure in the imagination. Decay takes hold of both the subject

experiencing pleasure and the object of pleasure, and that is the root of insecurity. All this need not make us pessimists or nihilists. There is a path leading to the extinction of suffering. This, as will be discussed later, is what clearly separates philosophies like existentialism from Buddhism.

Pleasure and pain

Just as important as the concept of *dukkha* is the allied question of the Buddhist attitude to pleasure. Concepts like pessimism and nihilism have been used to describe the doctrine of *dukkha*. This is often due to an inability to understand the Buddhist attitude to pleasure. In accepting the reality of suffering, Buddhism does not deny the presence of happiness. In the same way that evil and suffering are not reduced to a conjuror's rope trick (as being mere illusion), the Buddha makes a detailed analysis of the various types of pleasures and the pleasure principle in general.

There are three types of feelings—pleasant (*sukhā*), painful (*dukkhā*) and indifferent (*adukha-m-asukhā*). The term *vedanā* suggests some kind of hedonic tone; it is pleasant if it is agreeable, and painful if it is disagreeable. Pleasure is considered as a natural phenomenon, and with the immaterial and the material planes of existence left aside, the earth is referred to as a sense sphere. It is also said that the realm of human beings is abundantly pleasant when compared with hell or the animal world. In fact, it could be said that in a sense there is more pleasure than pain in the human world. In the homily to Sigāla dealing with the virtues of the householder, enjoyment of desire as such is not condemned; what is condemned is pleasure that is vicious, excessive and illegitimate (*visama-lobha*).

However, in the majority of sermons given to the monks, sense pleasures are referred to as a source of danger. This is all the more emphasised for the one bent on the attainment of mind development. However, the Pali scriptures refer to the bliss of renunciation and pleasures of a qualitatively different sort that can be enjoyed by the monk (A i:80). But such states do not involve any attachment. The persistence of strong attachment (*upādāna*) makes people blind to the

little tragedies that come their way, till an unbearable one puts them off balance. Thus, for people who consider a life of complete renunciation difficult, the Buddha recommends the life of a righteous householder. It is said that such people seek wealth by lawful means, and use wealth without greed and longing, get ease and pleasure for themselves and others and do meritorious deeds (A v:176).

Attitude to death

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno was immensely disturbed by the meaning of death. 'This thought that I must die and the enigma of what will come after death is the very palpitation of my consciousness' (de Unamuno 1954:40). For him the meaning of death and the riddle of life are aspects of the same problem. He says, 'Why do I wish to know whence I come and whither I go, whence comes and whither goes everything that environs me, and what is the meaning of it all? For I do not wish to die utterly...' (de Unamuno 1954:33). His own solution is to assert his hunger for immortality, in the most quixotic manner, by making a plea for passion over rationality. Meditation on the phenomenon of death is a basic theme in the philosophy of Heidegger and many other philosophers who are labelled as existentialists. Hook (1970) describes all this as a 'fear of death and a craving for immortality', and by implication includes Buddhism in the same category. But what is the Buddhist attitude to death and the craving for immortality?

Hook favours the reflective attitude to death (as he calls it), as opposed to the popular attitude or the one displayed by those in its last agonies. As far as we know, the common way to deal with the subject of death is to avoid talking about it. 'To the average man death is by no means a pleasant subject for talk or discussion. It is something dismal and oppressive...it is only the shock of a bereavement under his own roof, the sudden and untimely death of a parent, wife or a child that will rouse him up...and rudely awaken him to the hard fact of life,' says a Buddhist, making a general observation about man's attitude to death (Gunaratne 1966:1). As Heidegger (1962) has pointed out, we can try to forget these situations by getting immersed in the 'idle chatter' of everyday existence. But to be roused from this inauthentic and

anonymous existence one requires the shock of encountering 'ultimate' situations. Hence Buddhism too is critical of the popular attitude to death.

However, this does not mean that the Buddhist attitude to death is morbid. It is not a morbid expression of death in its last agonies. The Buddhist does not preach any excessive pessimism or melancholia. We are expected to display an element of realism and face the hard facts of life instead of covering up the realities before us. In showing a way out of misery and ignorance, Buddhism is optimistic.

Buddhism is critical of mourning, melancholia and weeping as reactions to the death of those dear to us. It is necessary to understand death's meaning as referred to by the Buddha on numerous occasions. The stories of Patācāra and Kisāgotami depict in a very concrete way the Buddhist attitude to death. These lines from the *Uraga Jātaka* convey the same moral: 'No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead: Why should I grieve? He fares the way he had to tread.'

The existentialists often go beyond the Buddhist attitude. They do sometimes display elements of morbidity and nihilism. Not only is the Buddhist attitude different to this, but the Buddha offers a clear diagnosis of the meaning of death. The existentialist often dramatises the phenomenon of death and the nausea of existence, but does not go beyond this. A Buddhist is expected to face the fact of death with equanimity and understanding. Liberation is not possible through agony and self-torment. Undoubtedly one should face the fact of death, reflect on its meaning and develop an insight regarding its meaning. In fact, recollection on the fact of death (*maranānussati*) is a form of meditation practised by the monk. It is a corrective for people whose personality is dominated by greed and attachment (*rāga carita*). Those in whom anger and hatred dominate (*dōsa carita*) are advised not to practise this initially. They are advised to practise thoughts on loving kindness and compassion. This illustrates the fact that Buddhism is in a sense a therapeutic system based on psychology. This is also expressed in the Buddhist attitude to death. In short, all violent attempts to deal with the problem of human suffering, such as self-torture, asceticism, suicide

and even the quixotic vitalism of de Unamuno, are misguided. They lack insight and are subject to the delusion of the ego in a subtle form.

Thus the Buddhist attitude to anguish (*dukkha*) offers a striking contrast to that of the Jains, who practised the way of self-mortification. The deliberate attempt to live through painful experiences and the technique of purging and burning up the effects of *karma* is condemned by the Buddha. While such violent attempts to deal with the problem of human suffering issue from the craving for self-annihilation, de Unamuno's lament for immortality emerges from the craving for self-preservation. Anguish cannot be mastered by anguish. Anguish has to be mastered by equanimity (M iii Devadaha sutta).

Immortality and annihilation

Hook claims that all this preoccupation with the phenomenon of death is really a manifestation of the craving for immortality. In fact, there are certain misguided critics who interpret the Buddhist ideal of *nibbāna* as a craving for immortality. Some others consider it a doctrine of annihilation. This misunderstanding can be avoided if we pay heed to the concepts of *bhava taṇhā* (craving for self-preservation and immortality), and *vibhava taṇhā* (craving for annihilation), and how these differ from the concept of *nibbāna*.

Bhava taṇhā arises with a false conception of personality, based on the dogma of personal immortality (*sassata diṭṭhi*). This is the belief in an ego entity existing independently of those physical and mental processes that constitute life. This entity is assumed to exist as a permanent thing, continuing after death. *Vibhava taṇhā* emerges on the view that the physical and the mental processes that are identified with the ego will be annihilated at death (*uccheda diṭṭhi*). Though on a superficial examination these two attitudes appear diametrically opposed, against the larger background of the law of dependent origination, they are considered to be contrasting attitudes of a being bound to craving. If we compare both these concepts with *nibbāna*, the concept of *nibbāna* stands in opposition to both *bhava taṇhā* and *vibhava taṇhā*. The Buddha says that people usually lean on this duality of existence and non-existence, and this attitude is projected onto the ideal

of *nibbāna*. Some consider *nibbāna* as pure being, pure consciousness and pure self; others give it a nihilistic interpretation.

The Buddhist should not fall into the net of immortality doctrines and thus be critical of de Unamuno's approach. Those who are subject to the craving for immortality will fail to realise the truths of *anicca*, *anattā* and *dukkha*. The Buddhist should be equally critical of annihilationism. In fact, the charge of being an annihilationist was made against the Buddha. The Buddha replied that if he preaches any annihilation, it is the annihilation of *kilesas* (defilements). Magandiya refers to the Buddha as a destroyer of growth (*bhūnaha*). But the Buddha taught not the destruction but the control of the sense organs, the suppression of greed and the development of wisdom. In this context *nibbāna* is compared to the restoration of health, and suffering is compared to the presence of a basic malady in human beings. Thus the nihilistic interpretation of Buddhism was rejected by the Buddha. The philosophy of *dukkha* is not fed by a fear of death and a craving for immortality. Buddhism is critical of immortality doctrines and calls on people to dispel morbid fears of death. It is necessary to develop an insight into the nature of human suffering.

If people think that death can give them 'some assurance that no evil will last for ever' as Hook (1970) suggests, they are under the spell of the dogma of annihilationism. The Buddhist will also remind de Unamuno in his own words that it certainly is 'a tragic fate without a doubt, to have to base the affirmation of immortality upon the insecure and slippery foundation of the desire for immortality' (de Unamuno 1954:47).

Existentialism and Buddhism

Conze, examining the true and false parallels between Buddhism and European philosophy, makes an interesting point regarding existentialism. Though it is not possible to agree with all the observations on comparative philosophy made by Conze, his comparative examination of Buddhism and existentialism sheds some light on this much misunderstood problem. In his analysis of false parallels he confines himself to three kinds:

- Some, like Kant, are not parallels but tangential;
- those like Hume are merely deceptive;
- those like Bergson and existentialism are preliminary.

Limiting the analysis to what he says on existentialism, what does he mean by saying that existentialism resembles Buddhism merely at the preliminary level?

In terms of the Four Truths the existentialists have only the first, which teaches that everything is ill. Of the second, which assigns the origin of ill to craving, they have only a very imperfect grasp. As for the third and the fourth, they are quite unheard of.

Conze observes that the existentialists have not found a way out of their world-weariness. On the other hand the Buddhist is 'cheered by the hope of ultimate release and lightened by multifarious meditational experiences which ease the burden of life. Denied inspiration from the spiritual world the existentialists are apt to seek it from authoritarian social groups' (Conze 1963).

Though the Buddhist concept of *dukkha* is wider than the existentialist concept of suffering, the existentialist call to authentic existence is certainly rooted in the sense of tragedy that surrounds our day-to-day existence. To cite the view of Heidegger, the only way to achieve authentic existence 'is to treat one's life as progress towards death, the only event, in which we are genuinely each of us alone' (Warnock 1967:14). However, the Buddhist analysis goes beyond this, in not merely making us aware of the tragedies that surround us, but also making a diagnosis of them and suggesting a remedy. This is why Conze's analysis is far more satisfactory than that of Hook. Hook does not make any attempt to see the finer shades of difference among the Buddhists, philosophers with existentialist leanings like Tolstoy, and others like Sartre and Heidegger.

Hook says that the agony over death 'is one of the unloveliest features of the intellectual life of our philosophic times, and certainly unworthy of any philosophy which conceives itself as a quest for wisdom' (Hook

1970). Certainly those who make a quest for wisdom should not be agonised by thoughts of death. But yet one should come to terms with the fact of death, understand it as a phenomenon, and give an explanation as to why some people are agonised by it. This is what the Buddha has attempted. Today not merely the existentialists, but some analytic philosophers have evinced an interest in the problem. What is the meaning of death and what is the meaning of life? (Dilman 1965). Does the inevitability of death make a meaningful life impossible? To some it appears as a paradox; death cannot be relevant, yet it cannot be irrelevant either. It is true that some people ignore it and that some are obsessed by it, but one's attitude to death also reflects one's attitude to life.

The Buddha does not ignore the fact of death, nor is he obsessed by it. He is only offering a way of adjusting to it, though the practical psychology of Buddhism may be used for that purpose. The Buddha offers an analysis, a diagnosis and a comprehensive vision of the riddle of life and death. Thus his doctrine goes much beyond existentialism. To follow the doctrine of the Buddha is not merely to be attracted by a mood or merely to see the world from a new perspective (Warnock 1967:57), but to see things as they are (*yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti*).

Moral perplexity

There is another aspect to unhappiness, arising from the factors of intellectual puzzlement and moral perplexity. To be subject to this a person must be at least partially sensitive to the presence of suffering in the world. Gotama's experiment with the severe and unbearable asceticism of the times is a fine demonstration of the heartburning and suffering it can cause. According to the Buddha, such perplexity and doubt (*kankhā*) can be overcome. It is karmically unwholesome, paralyses thinking and hinders the inner development of man. Hook takes the factor of moral conflict as the basis of the tragic view. While the Buddha does not limit the basis of human suffering to moral perplexity alone, he has diagnosed the nature of moral perplexity and intellectual puzzlement. They come under wrong views (*diṭṭhi*)

regarding the nature and destiny of people, and lie within the causal setting that conditions human suffering.

The corrective to this is right view (*sammā dīṭṭhi*). This is described as the understanding of the four noble truths. There are many false theories that have misled people. The most powerful are the two forms of ego-illusion, eternity and annihilation doctrines. In the moral realm there are various theories of determinism and indeterminism criticised by the Buddha. One can eliminate moral perplexity by understanding the laws that govern the destiny of the individual (*bhava*), the law of moral retribution (*kamma*) and the law of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*).

To the problem of moral conflicts as presented by Hook (1970) a number of objections can be made. Firstly, Hook exaggerates the dominance of the dilemmatic situation. He blames the existentialist for mourning over the phenomenon of death but draws his paradigm of the moral problem from Sophoclean tragedy. In this he is embracing another existentialist theme—the emphasis on extreme situations for the examination of moral values. This is not to deny the fact that we face problematic issues as moral beings; but hypothetical examples cited in textbooks are not so common as some think them to be.

Secondly there are other types of moral situations that are equally important: the person who knows what to do but fails to do the right thing; the person who is suddenly taken unawares and gives into temptation; the person who pretends to have done the correct thing but is practising self-deception. Moral weakness, temptation, self-deception and many such factors are equally important (Lemmon 1962). The Buddha was not only interested in the moral dilemmas of exceptional people under extraordinary conditions. He also probed the moral debility of the common run of humanity.

What parades heroically as a conflict is often a clash of interest in which the choice of ethical imperatives is clear but unpleasant, or it is a command imperfectly understood... Their seeming importance is doubtless related to our fascination by tragedy, which features ethical conflicts to a degree unusual in life (Margenau 1964:267).

Thirdly ethics is not the ultimate realm in which the individual moves. *Sila* (morality), *samādhi* (meditation) and *paññā* (wisdom) together form a wide arena of individual action. Buddhist ethics should not be divorced from this context.

It is neither necessary nor possible to outline the Buddhist theory of ethics here. But its basis can be briefly summarised. The attainment of the state of the perfected one (*arahant*) is the *summum bonum* of Buddhist ethics. This is good in itself, and whatever is used to bring about this end is a right action. A right action is one that promotes one's own welfare as that of others. Buddhist ethics is firmly rooted on an analysis of the psychology of human motivation and is thus free from the problems that beset purely formalistic theories of ethics. Buddhism accepts the fact that moral responsibility cannot be evaded. People have free will and only volitional acts (*sancetanā*) come within the purview of ethical evaluation. These volitional acts have to be analysed against the background of the motivational roots (*mūla*). Early Buddhist psychology traces the springs of human motivation to six roots: *rāga* (craving), *dosa* (hatred), and *moha* (delusion) are described as immoral roots; *arāga* (charity), *adosa* (love), and *amoha* (knowledge) are moral roots. While the Buddha has requested people to refrain from actions that spring from the immoral roots, he also encourages people to do good actions that spring from the moral roots. There are three avenues of action: bodily, vocal and mental. Actions that issue from these avenues are conditioned by dispositions, which function at various levels. Sometimes we are vaguely conscious of our actions, sometimes our desires spring from certain dormant traits (*anusayas*) of which we are not aware. Thus a process of vigorous self-analysis is necessary. This takes us to other dimensions of action like concentration, meditation (*samādhi*) and knowledge (*paññā*).

All this provides the Buddhist with a comprehensive frame of reference for examining broad problems of morality and specific dilemmas. The philosophical basis of ethics, the interpretation of the ethical code, the contextual situation, and above all a genuine desire to do the correct thing as it sincerely appears to the individual, all these

come into play in a given moral situation. The factor of motive or intention (*cetanā*) plays a very significant part.

An attempt to examine moral dilemmas in the light of the Buddhist doctrine has been attempted by Francis Story (1965), in a preliminary way. As he suggests, a rational examination of moral dilemmas is possible. But there is no over-emphasis of this kind of dilemma in Buddhism. How is it that people commit evil acts (*akusala*) of body, speech and mind? Can self-knowledge and a deeper understanding of humanity bring about better conditions for the elimination of human suffering? The basis of Buddhist ethics is therapeutic. 'Why do people get into problematic situations?' is a more important question than 'How can we resolve this particular dilemma?'. At least the latter question has to be analysed in the light of the former. If Hook (1970) uses the term 'melioristic' to describe his version of pragmatism, the therapeutic basis of Buddhist ethics should certainly attract his attention (de Silva, M 1967).

Love and hatred

The Buddhist ideal of compassion has been misunderstood by Hook (1970). He says:

The Buddhist saint or any other who out of respect for the right to life of man or beast refuses even to use force, or to kill even when this is the only method, as it sometimes is, that will save the multitude from suffering and death, makes himself responsible for the greater evil, all the more so because he claims to be acting out of compassion.

As was mentioned earlier, Hook cites three approaches to life, and of these considers the way of love to be ambiguous and incomplete. 'It is incomplete because if love is more than a feeling of diffused sympathy but is expressed in action no *man* can love every one or identify himself with every interest'. It is ambiguous as 'there are various kinds of love and the actions to which they lead may be incompatible' (Hook 1970).

The three approaches to tragic conflicts cited by Hook may not be exhaustive. But let us limit the discussion to a clarification of the Buddhist concept of compassion. The Buddhist scriptures mention four

sublime states of mind (*brahma vihāra*). They are *mettā* (compassionate love), *karunā* (sympathy towards those in distress), *muditā* (ability to rejoice with those who are justly happy), and *upekkhā* (impartiality to all). The English word 'love' is used in a very loose sense, but in Pali it is easier to make fine distinctions with words used in the Buddhist scriptures. The Buddha is careful to differentiate *mettā* from any kind of sensuous love (*kāma*, *rāga*, *methuna*). It has also to be distinguished from feelings of affection and attachment (*pema*, *sineha*).

Compassionate love is not a diffused feeling, unexpressed in action as Hook maintains. The very spread of Buddhism was achieved without using any military force, and its finest expression was found in the kingdom of Asoka, who remarked: 'All men are my children'. The doctrine of the Buddha is pervaded by this message of compassionate love. 'Hatred never ceases by hatred, through loving kindness it comes to an end' (Dh 5); that is the message of Buddhism. The doctrine of compassion is not an incomplete doctrine, neither is it ambiguous. If as Hook says there are 'various kinds of love', they have to be psychologically distinguished, linguistically clarified, without blaming the doctrine of compassion for it. In fact the *Sigālovāda sutta* is a good instance where some of these basic human relationships—the relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, husband and wife, friend and friend, master and servant, layman and recluse—are analysed. For instance, parents express their love for their children in five ways: they restrain them from vice, exhort them to virtue, train them to a profession, contract a suitable marriage and pass on the emotions of love, devotion, respect and regard (D sutta 31). This shows that the Buddhist need not be scared of the linguistic bogey that is love.

It is not possible here to analyse in detail the Buddhist attitude to war (Jayatilleke 1962), punishment (Jayawardena 1967), killing and so on. They have been analysed in detail by some scholars. A Buddhist is not expected to use force and violence, whatever the circumstances. The Buddha's actual intervention during the war between Koliyas and Sakyas shows in a practical way how the doctrine of compassion works. There are many contexts where the Buddha has demonstrated the futility

of war as a method of settling disputes. All this has to be seen against the wider background of the right way of life. For instance, one should not take to professions that prosper on the destruction of life, like the sale of arms, human beings, flesh and poisonous drugs. Thus the request not to kill does not remain at a negative level (M i:129).

The doctrine of compassionate love is a message relevant to our times. Though Hook does not see the value of this doctrine, others, such as Erich Fromm, say that it is the problem of love that should have an answer to the problem of human existence. He says that this can be done only by overcoming man's narcissism (Fromm 1962b). The Buddhist scriptures make a detailed analysis of the roots of egoism, which fortifies the doctrine of compassion. This takes us beyond compassionate love to other ideals like self-knowledge and truth. Knowledge about the truths regarding the nature of humanity and universe is necessary to establish the doctrine of compassion on a sound footing.

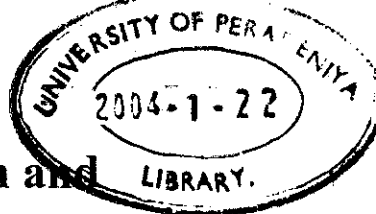
The tragic

A detailed analysis of the linguistic issues involved in the usage of the word 'tragic' is not necessary for our purpose here. But since the burden of Hook's argument rests on his preference for a certain definition of the tragic, it is pertinent to make some brief remarks about it. The concept of *dukkha* has an experiential basis and is interpreted in the light of factual data. The tragic is primarily a concept interpreted in the light of norms that guide dramatic theory. I am not saying that Hook has blatantly confused two realms of discourse, but rather that he should have been more cautious in transferring a word already containing the overtones of dramatic theory to the field of philosophical jargon. There are logicians who draw inspiration from mathematics, and moral philosophers who draw their examples from jurisprudence. The relationship between literature and philosophy is more controversial, though not altogether antagonistic. This makes it necessary that philosophers of religion should be extra careful when they draw their analogies from literature.

There are many theories of drama about tragedy (see Henn 1956), and there are no *a priori* grounds favouring one theory. Hook's preference for Sophoclean tragedy is not any better than others. The concept of the 'tragic' in drama is a concept that has a history. The history of some concepts is monotonous enough to be ignored. But the history of the concept of the tragic in drama merely emphasises the variety of tragic themes. The word 'tragic' also has many uses in ordinary language, and the matter of definition remains a problem. Hook himself says that the 'primary locus of the tragic situation is not in a play but in life, in law, and in history' (Hook 1970). Certainly tragedy in drama loses meaning if it is not realistic. But the nature of the tragic in life situations is as varied as the variety of dramatic theories about the 'tragic'. Thus it is difficult to limit all tragedy to moral dilemmas. For instance the phrase 'It is tragic to be robbed of the brilliance of life' refers to the fact that the vigour and vitality of youth suddenly fall prey to the hand of death. There are many such contexts, where a tragic moral dilemma does not appear, and yet there is a legitimate use of the word 'tragic'.

The concept of human suffering is more comprehensive, complex and rich than the notion of tragedy offered by Hook. The doctrine of the Buddha in this light is certainly a diagnosis and an answer to the perils of human tragedy.

The author had some correspondence regarding the points raised in the chapter with Sidney Hook and J H Smith. The issue regarding violence which Hook raises is important, though it is only a peripheral problem in our discussion. It is certainly complex and deserves more attention than the limited discussion here. In general, the Buddhist does not advocate any absolutism. The five precepts are not commands, they are the personal resolve of a person who tries as hard as possible to avoid violence and to prevent violence being used as a way of settling disputes.



Moral indignation and the logic of violence

Once an ill-favoured, ugly looking demon (yakkha) came to be seated on the throne of Sakka, the ruler of gods. Then the gods (thirty-three of them) were annoyed, vexed and consumed with indignation at this very strange and unusual sight. Now in proportion as they became annoyed, vexed and indignant, that demon grew ever handsomer and more presentable and more attractive. The gods were disturbed and reported the incident to their ruler, Sakka: 'Will this, then, dear sir, be a demon who feeds on anger?'

Then Sakka came to the demon, draping his rope over one shoulder, and kneeling on his right knee, bent forth his clasped hands towards him, calling his own name thrice: 'I dear sir, am Sakka, the ruler of gods!'

Now, in proportion as Sakka did this, the demon became more and more ill-favoured and ugly, till he vanished from the place.

Sakka addressed the gods pointing out that no kind of wrath finds an abiding place within him: 'To harsh and angry words I give no breath, Nor to my creed may I inconstant prove. But I restrain and hold myself in check, Heedful of my spiritual growth' (S Tr).

Indignation and anger

There is a sense of jubilation, hope and power when good triumphs over evil, but there is a sense of impatience, indignation and even depression, when (apparently) evil triumphs over good. There is a sense of impatience, as one cannot await the slow and subtle process by which often the moral universe registers and recognises good. There is depression, as one's world of values collapses, for it does not appear to generate the triumphant vindication of its idols and ideals; indignation emerges from the feeling that some wrong has been done, and it passes through a complex process of hurt, resentment, impatience, anger.

Buddha reminds the one who is impatient that the crooked ones in the world will generate the very pathway that will bring their downfall, that the good and the right call for patience, a sense of sacrifice, and silent persistence (which has no drama to it), and that the eventual triumph of good is not always by a single, drastic event. The Buddha would admonish people who feel powerless and depressed to summon the necessary courage and steer through difficult times. He would remind them that even the most saintly bring with them the momentum of actions and reactions from innumerable past lives—it is useful to consider this as a possibility without seeking consolation in any kind of fatalism that is not present in the universe. He would also add, if the depression was caused by the loss of material possessions, that a loss in values is a greater calamity, and such great perennial possessions like the possession of great ‘values’ is not a thing that fire or theft can destroy. When material possessions are lost by theft, slander or misunderstanding, the radiance of those who stick silently to their work of values is tremendous.

It is ironical that the feeling of indignation has strong moral roots, and the flavour of authenticity and warmth, yet it can get transformed into strange forms of violence. Some moral emotions (of which indignation is the clearest case) do inhabit the great periphery where the noble gets transformed into the ignoble. Even Aristotle, who wrote a fascinating tract on moral emotions, an insightful account of anger and a celebrated presentation of the golden mean is often said to have a soft preference for what he called ‘righteous indignation’ (see Thomson 1959). This chapter will explore the dilemmas and the ambiguities inherent in our understanding of the logic and ethics of indignation including its social, psychological and cultural framework. The cultural and social implications of moral emotions are a neglected subject. Aristotle was one of those early explorers who shed light on the logic and ethics of anger—our routine moods are caught between revenge and forgiveness, the bad-tempered and the meek. According to Thomson (1959), Aristotle says that ‘righteous indignation’ is the mean between envy and malice. The refinement and sensitivity one can bring to emotional responses is a subject that has central implications for the

kind of society and culture we wish to build for our children. Our study of indignation is placed within the wider framework of core values and the ethos of a culture. Some of the early anthropological studies of Ruth Benedict and others explored what may be called culture configurations or patterns that helped them to identify the basic ethos of a culture. Briggs found equanimity to be the genius of that culture (Solomon 1978). Today, with the sense of fragmentation that has set into our ways of thought and life, more piecemeal oriented research may be relevant. Responses very Buddhist in spirit, depth and direction call for a great deal of critical heart-searching and realism, as well as an imaginative entry into an ancient world, which has to be recreated for our times.

The study of emotions and the complex moral climate

It is perhaps no more than a common place that moral education is in part at least an education of the emotions. Yet, moral philosophers have often taken this to mean merely that we must learn to control them, for if we fail to do so we are at the mercy of what is fickle and irrational (Taylor 1975).

Such a view has implied that emotions do not contribute to the moral value of a person. Deep emotional restraint (instead of superficial emotional control) where necessary will best emerge with a close understanding of the complex features involved in certain emotions. A more sensitive evaluation of human beings is also possible when one can appreciate the conceptual complexities of emotions. Deficiencies and refinement in emotional responses cut across the socio-cultural context of a society, for emotions betray people's deep orientations towards the world.

This complexity of the conceptual structure of emotions and of moral emotions (like indignation) partly reflect complexities of three kinds in our world: (i) social reality, (ii) human character, (iii) the network of human relations. While accepting all these three as basic facets of the human predicament, the Buddha will emphasise a fourth factor, (iv) the in-built dialectic of people's quest for identity (see de Silva 1984a).

The complexity of human character, especially in moral contexts, has been drowned by the hero-villain dichotomy. Instead of neatly labelling people as hero and villain, one should be prepared to sense the tremendous spectrum of light and dark shades in human emotions, strange reversals in apparently stable people, patches of kindness in hard-hearted souls, the ever fresh tensions, ambiguities and dualities found in normal people, the uniqueness of contexts, the specificity of each one's emotional blends and complexes.

The Buddha did not discard people by calling them moral outcasts. He saw a streak of illumination in the criminal Aṅgulimāla and the potential for change in Paṭācāra. Once the complexity of character is accepted, the potential for anger or indignation can be tempered by patience, anger can be changed into a kind of firmness and resentment may be overtaken by forgiveness.

Indignation treads the margins of emotions that get converted into impatience and even violence. Paying homage to the complexity of human nature is one way in which we can understand people or even differ from people without condemnation and conceit.

However, the exigencies of routine life make us brush aside such possible human complexities. We live in a world neatly structured by a sense of predictability—a world of bargaining, business, survival and security. We have no time to understand people and hardly any desire to change them. Our manipulative skills work when things and people run on a strict line of predictability.

It is a well established hypothesis of empirical psychology, as well as commonsense intuition, that there are well-trodden regularities in human behaviour. Such regularities are not merely empirically seen, but are necessary, as they are the rails on which character-building runs and they are the surest guarantee that we will not give in to any kind of nihilism in human affairs. But there is a difference between well articulated, rich, flexible and creative regularities of human character, and the automatisms that have eaten into our systems. Such automatisms make our healthy emotional potential degenerate into a reactive

mechanism of attraction and aversion. As we have shown elsewhere, education of the moral emotions, in the Buddhist context, rejects such a reactive mechanism (de Silva 1981). As Venerable Nyanaponika (1983:1–6) has pointed out, we can break through these reactive mechanisms of aversion and attraction by focussing on the vanishing points of feeling repeatedly and with increasing clarity. As we can break through lust, hatred and boredom by dealing with the automatisms of the mind, we create the inner space for the growth of the finer emotions and virtues—for loving kindness and compassion, for contentment, patience and forbearance.

While this chapter will take us close to the discovery of this inner space which makes compassion and patience possible, it is also inspired to look at the subtle and circuitous paths taken by our sense of indignation. Can we like a clever surgeon separate temporarily the strands of anger and venom from a sense of hurt for a wrong done, from a sense of firmness in upholding correct values, from a sense of vigilance that looks down upon emotional stupidity, dullness, cowardice and ignorance? When clarity, patience and equanimity are added to this sense of being hurt, it does not grow into resentment and anger. In a world growing in its complexity, such refined sensitivity both at the experiential and conceptual levels generates that great stance of life: live and let live, give and take.

While focussing on character emphasises the importance of ethical evaluations of the complete person rather than isolated actions, social reality makes us go beyond the person and discern the outer behavioural and societal complexity. The development of technology and modern life have created a range of problems that did not exist during the time that the great religions of the world emerged. For instance, questions pertaining to population control, biomedical ethics, nuclear warfare, and complex forms of terrorism were not live issues, for the conditions that generated them were not present at the time. Thus, in a sense, this age has generated new types of ethical dilemmas. Though ethical dilemmas were present in ancient times, they never emerged with such complexity and they never came into the very centre of our ethical concerns.

The Buddhist path is a diagnostic tool aimed at the removal of the conditions that generate conflicts rather than intervention in an escalated crisis situation. It will also place morality in a larger framework, so that tension points or the dilemmatic are seen as a part of the larger human predicament and its incongruity (*dukkha*).

In general, the dilemmatic within moral phenomena shows us that we have to go beyond the sharply judgemental attitude to people and situations to a more flexible ethic of care and concern.

In referring to the network of human relations, I have in mind the very special type of relations among the members of a family, relations between teachers and students, religious advisers and their followers, and social relations, which call for specific duties and obligations in the context of one's profession, neighbourhood, friendships and so on.

For instance, when a man develops a temporary state of anger, if it is about his daughter's indifference to schoolwork, it would emerge as a father's concern for his child; if an employee does not respect him, his anger will be tied to his sense of dignity; if a very close friend deserted him, it would be a blend of anger and sadness. A person may be annoyed at a passing remark or disturbed at the sense of injustice in a deep-rooted social system. One could even feel angry with oneself or with something one cannot articulate. In general, the intricate web of social relations colours the demand for appropriate emotional responses, whether they be emotions of love or anger. (For specific types of relationships, see the *Sigālovāda sutta*.)

When it comes to feelings of anger with oneself, we see the emergence of the most complicated of human emotions. One's anger at one's own blemished self-image is related in a strange way to the dialectic of the quest for identity. It is good to have a vigilant sense of self-criticism, but there is no need to indulge in self-destructive and masochistic pining.

These complexities cut across the complexities of moral emotions, and the logic and ethics of indignation cannot be separated from these contexts.

The critique of indignation

There are some who say that the inability to express indignation at a wrong done is a sign of stupidity and lack of moral sensitivity. Can we agree with this contention? Others say that it is a very negative feeling, and that it is basically an expression of resentment and envy. How far can we go with this contention?

Indignation can take three forms: indignation over wrongs suffered by others, over wrongs we ourselves have suffered and reflective indignation over wrongs we ourselves have caused. It can be directed at persons, acts and impersonal notions like nature or the world-order (Neblett 1979). The feeling of indignation also runs through a complex circuit of hurt, resentment, and anger and can be coloured by a sense of right and wrong, breaking of trust, concepts of justice and so on. In the way that the sense of loss is central to grief and the sense of a threat is central to fear, the sense of injustice is central to indignation (often called righteous indignation). Like the broader feeling of anger, indignation is related to human agency and to intention, and has a specific focus. But the more narrow locus of indignation is basically a moral feeling related to the concept of unfairness.

What is the case against indignation? Moral indignation is mere resentment, and it has its roots in envy. Moral indignation is more characteristic of our behaviour when we feel bad than when we feel good. Indignation is an angry feeling and basically destructive. At the self-reflective level, it can be damaging. Finally, it rides on the distinction that humanity can be clearly divided into good and bad people.

In defence of indignation

It is wrong to insist that indignation is not compatible with more positive feelings: 'it is a fitting response to the betrayal of loyalty, it is the natural ally of feelings of concern for victims of injustice, and in a morally sensitive personality aware of its own imperfections, it need not preclude a disposition to forgive' (Neblett 1979).

Though some indignant feelings may be a disguise for resentment, it is not always so—there are times it can be fitting and fair. When there is authoritarianism in a society, or even in personal lives, forms of indignation, not too violently or loudly proclaimed, can keep the sparks of discontent going, without dulling one's sense of right and wrong. Mere contempt for the wrong-doer, on the other hand, is an inverted form of arrogance. Moderate and intermittent doses of indignation, and especially the expression of indignation without violence but with a sense of vigilance, may do some good to society. While forms of pathological asceticism, sadism, suicide and other forms of outwardly-expressed discontent are blends of anger and self-preoccupation, the chemistry of indignation can be direct, simple, and a passing state not preserved in the mind with venom and feelings of revenge. While feelings of hatred run underground and feelings of being merely hurt are ineffective, the voice of indignation has an open directionality, clarity and courage. Forgiveness, tolerance and patience need a sense of resonance. Do all wrong-doers respond to such magnanimity? True resonance calls for noble qualities on both sides of the battle lines. Are we then caught between the ethic of indignation and the ethic of understanding?

The concept of indignation emerges at the meeting point of a number of pathways:

- The language of promise-keeping, contracts, agreements and rules and laws that tie people together. The legalistic world generates its own brand of indignation for violation of promise and trust.
- The language of petition and prayer coming from an ancient world, appealing to a cosmic sense of justice. The world order, the gods and symbols of cosmic justice are appealed to and invoked in the name of wrongs done, misfortunes, natural disasters and types of distress that have no rationale. There is also a more restrained and critical upholding of the moral order, backed by patience and confidence that the slow rolling of the wheel will vindicate the triumph of our perennial value system.

- The world of tender trust and mutual support across human relationships, family friendship and fellow feeling. It is here that the most poignant and delicate feelings of trust and desertion emerge, and it is here that indignation and forgiveness meet.

The language of law (though made and implemented by human beings) aims at a kind of impersonal justice; the language of cosmic justice is also removed from the field of average human failings and limitations. Humanity contains the seeds of violence, revenge and retaliation for wrongs done, as well as the magnanimous gestures of patience, understanding, tolerance, equanimity and forgiveness. It is within this network of human relations that a Buddhist could not only point towards the realism of the legal system and the supremacy of the moral order, but also separate the strands of hurt from anger, broken trust from retaliation, the imprint of morality from indignation.

To locate the place of indignation within the broader spectrum of the emotion of anger and its recalcitrant varieties, it is necessary to examine closely the profile of anger, especially within a Buddhist perspective.

Anger and the many forms of aggression

Anger is generally considered to be a violent and dangerous emotion. But it need not always be explosive, there can be 'slow-burners' or 'short-fused'; there can be those directed at on-the-spot targets, and those emerging from subterranean sources, moving aimlessly. Anger can work silently, almost undetected, and blend with other emotions as contempt (combination of aversion and conceit), envy (greed and aversion) and self-disgust (egoism and self-hatred). Anger can even find a masochistic under-current, where elements of primitivism and aggression are integrated. Thus anger has light and dark shades as well as noisy and latent forms. Anger can also be tied up with the condemnation of evil or of evil persons. It is at the point where anger joins with morality to condemn evil and wrongs that the issues of moral indignation is seen.

At the more obvious level, anger can be considered as an avoidance desire, just as greed can be considered an approach desire. In the case of avoidance desires generated by fear and more so by hatred, there is a negative desire to avoid the person or the situation, and if this is not possible, there is in us a tendency to harm or an urge to destroy what we do not like. The actual human situation can sometimes be more complicated, as sometimes a certain aspect of an object attracts us and a certain aspect repels us, giving way to emotional ambivalence.

A number of reasons can be cited for the more common occurrences of anger: frustration of desire and the interference with its fulfilment, physical threats, psychologically-hurting insults, violation of accepted values, and so on. We also have different words to describe the types of anger: irritation—with someone blocking your way while driving; annoyance—at the blast of a loud speaker that disturbs your reading; indignation—at the breaking of a promise; anger—at the neighbour who spreads malicious gossip.

In the Buddhist analysis, there are a number of terms to describes forms of anger: *dosa* (hate), *vyāpāda* (ill will), *patigha* (aversion), *kodha* (wrath), *kopa* (grudge). *Dosa* (hate) is one of the roots of immoral action (the others being greed and delusion), and as a root it is comprised of 'all degrees of repulsion from the faintest trace of ill-humour up to the highest pitch of hate and wrath' (Nyanatiloka 1956:94). But the three roots influence each other. When the gratification of desire is blocked, greed causes resentment. Frustrated desire, even when it does not lead to aversion, can take the form of grief, envy, despair and so on. Both greed or lust (*lobha*) and hate (*dosa*) get a firmer hold on the human mind because of the delusive views pertaining to the ego (*moha*).

We also know that often people do not show their real feelings of ill will and anger. Sometimes people are forced by the exigencies of social life to inhibit their feelings. When there is a process of concealing, inhibition or repression, feelings settle at a subterranean level in the form of *patighānusaya* (a dormant tendency to show resentment and ill will). The *anusayas* are different from passing mental states in that they have eaten into one's nature and found a habitat. Freud remarked

that the voice of aggression is sometimes subtle, invisible and difficult to unravel.

The self-destructive urge

Psychologists have long been interested in sex and love, egoism and simple aggression. But since the publication of the later Freudian work on the 'death instinct' (later called the 'Thanatos'), there has been a greater interest in the more subtle expression of aggression. Though a suicidal death-urge was not accepted by the majority of clinical psychologists, a subtler masochistic under-current, as well as aggression as a reactive (rather than an appetitive) response, was an acceptable notion that came to emphasise the 'many faces of human aggression'.

Though people are normally guided by the 'pleasure principle', we are attuned to enjoying smaller doses of displeasure, as though developing a 'masochistic undercurrent' within ourselves. The relevance of this point to our contemporary world comes out well in Alvarez (1971): '...musicians exploring the possibilities of random noise, painters immortalising industrial waste...and a youth culture devoted to the gradual chronic suicide of drug addiction'.

In the psychology of Buddhism, there is a reference to three types of craving: the craving for sensuous gratification which emerges from the root greed; the craving for self-preservation, which also emerges from the root greed; the craving for annihilation, which is related to the root hatred. Though Freud himself was somewhat baffled by his own concept of a self-destructive urge, the Buddha had some profound insights into the strange 'affinity of Eros and Thanatos':

In the threatening effacement of individuation, in the rapturous submergence of individuality at moments of highest passion—in these features Sensuous Craving approaches its apparent opposite, the Craving for Annihilation (*vibhava taṇhā*). It is ancient knowledge: the affinity of Eros and Thanatos, of passionate love and death (Nāṇamoli 1977:33).

The Buddha's second insight into the craving for annihilation is its relation to disgust, frustration and despair, as in instances of suicide: worn out by the vicissitudes of life, man longs for a sleep without

awakening; he wants to obliterate himself as a protest against a world that does not grant his wishes. As an irrational revenge, man wants to destroy himself or others. As Fromm has pointed out, from this disposition even violent and fanatical creeds of destruction can emerge (see Fromm 1974).

Thirdly, the Buddhist perspective also points how ascetic paths aimed at self-mortifications and certain Brahmins who laid down the destruction of the essential being, loathing their bodies, simply 'keep running and circling their own body' (M iii:232–233). The *Middle length sayings* gives remarkable insight into the vicious circle within which certain religious cults of self-mortification are bound. Though individuals try to get rid of the 'essential being' in a destructive way, they paradoxically betray a tremendous concern with the self. Speculating and constructing theories about the self, they display morbid preoccupation with the body. The Buddha tried out the way of self-mortification and found that it was misguided and unprofitable. The deliberate attempt to live through painful experiences for *kamma* advocated by some Jains was equally rejected by the Buddha.

Finally, going into deep religious experiences, the Buddhist is even critical of 'annihilationist-type mystical experience' (Bodhi 1978:32). The suttas mention seven kinds of annihilationism, and of these only one identifies the self with the physical body; the others identify the self with the inner principle: 'They may be formulations of those mystical theologies which speak of the "annihilation of the soul in God", the "descent into the divine abyss", the "merging of the drop into the divine ocean", etc' (Bodhi 1978).

We have discussed the annihilation–eros link, the annihilation and self-disgust frame, the annihilation–asceticism escape and the annihilationist-type of mysticism. It must be emphasised that whether we take the routine life of the householder committed to a righteous and harmonious life, or the recluse bound on liberation, the root hatred (*dosa*) can be a powerful obstacle, as strong as greed or delusion. It can enter the mind of the morally good person in the form of indignation and it can even enter the upper reaches of the mystic path.

Anger is a powerful emotion not merely because in its unalloyed form it expresses hatred and destruction, but also because in its less obvious forms, in its mixed, blended and parasitic entry into other emotions, it often lives undetected. Accumulated feelings of resentment (when not very intense) might add a little spice to living, like a short-lived storm of anger that precedes the warm feeling of reconciliatory love. To use a metaphor, sometimes we say that a little sour taste in a fruit cocktail makes it doubly tasty. We have got used to mixing up a little dose of pain with an exhilarating spell of pleasure, a little dose of anger with a stranger spell of love. People get fatigued between pleasure and pain, between love and hate, between life and death—so long as the drama is set forth within the recurrent framework of craving. This is why the Buddha was casting a profile, a framework for a style of life that steers clear of these ambiguities and ambivalences, on the narrow ridge between lust and hate.

Anger, indignation and morality

Now that the nature of anger in its multi-faceted forms has been explored, let us look again closely at the notion of indignation. Venerable Nyanaponika refers to three forms of grudges, the third being the expression of indignation:

- A grudge can be felt towards people by whom one has being wronged or offended;
- A grudge can also take an impersonal form, as a resentful bitterness about one's life, the idea that one is disadvantaged;
- There is what may be called a 'higher' form of grudge appearing as 'righteous indignation' and a resentful or even hostile attitude towards evil and evil doer...Even this 'higher' form of grudge, as well as its common lower form, will be transcended in a mind that has grown mature in compassion and understanding (Nyanaponika 1977:40–41).

Personal grudges arise from an inability to deal wisely with conflicts in human relationships. The antidote to this state will be forgiveness,

forbearance and the realisation that people are subject to *kamma*. Impersonal grudges caused by the vicissitudes of life can be met by understanding the nature of impermanence, our short existence and the operation of *kamma*. Deep-seated grudges also manifest in group antagonisms, political fanaticism, ethnic and class conflicts. 'Impartial examination of facts, together with understanding others in spite of differences' (Ñāṇamoli 1977), will be the best remedy for such predicaments.

Though righteous indignation sits on a higher pedestal—as it is directed against evil persons and evil—if not well handled, it can provide the base for more violent reactions. Unjust systems and morally degenerate actions have provided targets for diverse expressions of violence. Violence takes several basic forms: there is violence that springs from pure criminal activity; there is violence springing from nihilistic lifestyles that are heading towards chaos (certain forms of terrorism); there is violence intrinsic to the maintenance of state authority; and there is violence aimed at changing unjust socioeconomic systems. The emotion of indignation has great relevance for this last form of violence. Indignation can also lead to a kind of violence done to oneself, springing from a blemished self-image. For these and many other reasons, moral indignation is a theme that needs close study, whether we deal with individuals, groups or nations.

Once you accept the intricacies of the notion of indignation, it is helpful to sum up its basic limitations from a Buddhist point of view:

- We can agree with William Neblett that feelings of indignation can be purely negative. Unless we usher in the transformation of the undesirable condition, it estranges us. For a possible transformation of the object of indignation, an open mind is necessary (Neblett 1979).
- Indignation can take a person-oriented form instead of an act-oriented form. Though we are indignant at the actions of another, the person concerned may be capable of other admirable things in another context.

- If indignation is registered as a passing state, a passing moment generated to utter a protest it is not that destructive, compared with the harbouring of grievances like rancour and resentment over long periods.
- A feeling of indignation should be conveyed in a mood of dialogue rather than in the form of threats and intimidation.
- One who is indignant at the faults of others should not be blind to his or her own faults (Neblett 1979). If people are concerned about their own moral transformation, it is easy for them to wish for the moral transformation of others. Otherwise the anger of indignation can often blunt our appreciation of the amount of moral damage that wrong-doers do to themselves.

This is not to say that indignation is morally wrong without any qualification; rather, certain forms of righteous indignation (higher grudges) are preferable to indifference, apathy and the secret connivance with evil. But the feeling of righteous indignation should not lose its sense of directionality towards ideal goodness, and between noble and ignoble emotions. Indignation should be blended with understanding and a genuine concern for the transformation of the individual (perhaps in the way that a parent confronts the disagreeable behaviour of a child).

The psychology and the logic of anger are such that it raises its head at the most unexpected moment. Even in the very bosom of non-violent demonstrations (passive resistance, non-participation) the potentiality for a subtle kind of violence is not completely buried.

This chapter has conducted a restoration analysis of moral indignation, salvaging its clear voice of protest at a wrong done from its potential anger and venom, and resuscitating the notion that we should have moral sensitivity for the transformation of people who make us angry rather than exhibit a 'disdainful disregard for the person negatively judged' (Neblett 1979). Thus, though indignation is different from violence, the ethics of moral indignation shed light on an important and crucial facet of violence, that which is perpetrated in the name of the good against evil and in the name of justice over injustice.

Concluding thoughts

The study of moral emotions (of which indignation is one of the most significant) illuminates a variety of approaches that we use in our encounters with other people. There is the judgemental attitude—long before we come to know people (in the true sense of the word) we are used to placing them in categories, passing strictures and offering bouquets. With a willing suspension of the judgemental process we should listen and be open to what others say or do. The evaluative process should come later. Faulty feelings of indignation and resentment can be avoided by a preliminary non-judgemental attitude in the interactive process.

This could be balanced by a judicious use of our expressive capacities, the most human need to present our true selves, our joys and sorrows, and to discern parallel emotions in the facial contours of other people, their gestures, their verbal articulation and bodily stances. Feelings of mutual sympathy resonate within this most human framework of interaction.

There is also a therapeutic stance in our dealings with other people, where we can say in a particular context: 'of course he has done the wrong thing, but he wasn't himself at the time'. Such a perspective makes us see the person and actions in a different light. This kind of attitude is often used for criminal offences generated by personality breakdowns, but if we overdo it, we may convert a human being in a normal process of interaction into a patient or an object of social policy (see Strawson 1974). Judiciously used, without nullifying a person's normal sense of responsibility, the therapeutic mode helps us to understand the occasional faults and mistakes people make. In fact, a bred therapeutic stance of trying to understand the faults of others and correct them falls well within the image of the Buddha as a physician.

More than any of these styles of interaction, what may be called the cognitive approach, or the perception of other people and self-perception, which can break through our egocentric predicament at a very deep level, clears up many tangles in the process of human interaction. In the context of Buddhism, this should not be associated

with any excessive intellectualism into which this approach can degenerate, but combined with a deeper process of self-understanding and mindfulness. This leads to a finer generation of tolerance, forbearance, understanding and compassion. It is a mode hard to verbalise or conceptualise or even approximate by imagery and metaphor; it has to be experienced.

This helps us to reject a manipulative attitude to people, to construct a more holistic profile of fellow beings as capable of both good and evil, and to develop a greater respect for the human condition within a complex and fragmented world. Most of these stances are brought together in what may be called the appreciative or critical mode of interaction, where we can appreciate the worth of others and understand them but develop a critical attitude because we deeply wish that they change in some respect, and not because we are driven to pass strictures and judgements on others. We cannot always have ready-made axioms to deal with people; the tremendous variety of interactive patterns among people is a strain on our imagination, emotions and reason. But it is worthwhile making the best possible human response we can, and recreating in our own little worlds the vision that the Buddha saw and realised.

Suicide and emotional ambivalence

There are three important strands of concern about suicide in the current discussions of the subject across philosophy and religion. First is the concern with 'altruistic suicide', initially portrayed in the pioneering work of Emile Durkheim (1951). Second is debate about the unresolved moral problems concerning the 'value of life'. Biomedical technology has made it possible for people to prolong their lives, where in the past they would have died; sometimes these patients, ill and agonised by suffering, wish to put an end to their lives (see Glover 1982). Thirdly, apart from the task of making moral assessments about suicide, there has been a great need to understand its causal matrix, both the psychological forces and the social fabric that may contribute to the emergence of suicidal behaviour. The attempt to understand suicidal behaviour or its prototypes appears to me as important a task as attempting to define and classify or make moral and legal assessments of suicide (see de Silva 1989). It is a characteristic feature of the discourses of the Buddha that reflections on the human mind intertwine closely with reflections concerning the ethical and existential concerns of human beings. Logical boundaries between ethical issues and psychological issues need to be observed when the context demands, but in this chapter I am exploring the psychological and existential aspects of suicide and, apart from its intrinsic interest, it may illuminate issues in the adjacent territory.

Suicide in early Buddhism

A basic position that the Buddha takes about suicide is that people cannot use suicide to escape the sufferings that are the result of their former deeds. The image of 'eternal sleep' after death has nourished annihilationist delusions of suicide. It is a false escape route. The following statement is found in one of the Buddhist texts:

A monk who preaches suicide, who tells man: 'Do away with this wretched life, full of suffering and sin; death is better', in fact preaches murder, is a murderer, is no longer a monk (Wilson 1990a:iii).

The person who attempts to commit suicide or commits suicide fails to see that the tribulations of life are best understood in terms of the law of dependent origination and *kamma*. One cannot offset by violent means the implications and the consequences of *kamma*. The same point is made by the Buddha in relation to attempts to commit suicide due to religious motives, for example the impatience to attain *nibbāna*. A person who is under the spell of the craving for non-existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*) cannot attain *nibbāna*. A very fitting metaphor likens this to a person who tries to pluck an unripe fruit:

He shakes not down the unripe fruit,
but awaits the full time of its maturity (Wilson 1990b:44).

The well known *Pāyāsi Sutta* presents the heretical view that there is no other world after death, and that if this truth is well known to wanderers and Brahmins, they would put an end to their lives:

If these good Wanderers and Brahmins were to know this - 'when once we are dead we shall be better off' then these good men would take poison, or stab themselves, or put an end to themselves by hanging, or throw themselves from precipices. And it is because they do not know that, once dead, they will be better off, that they are fond of life, averse from dying... (D Tr ii:330).

The Venerable Kumāra Kassapa, in response, compares Payāsi to the woman who cuts open her belly to find out whether the child she hopes to have soon is a boy or a girl. The moral of the story is that the virtuous do not force maturity on that which is unripe; one has to lead a virtuous life and the results will follow. One could perhaps hasten one's liberation from suffering by living the Buddhist path with greater vigilance, enthusiasm and persistence. But suicide is no solution.

If these objections are based on a correct understanding of the law of *kamma* and dependent origination, there is a second objection, which is made on methodological grounds, as asceticism, suicide and self-torture are often attempts to deal, at a physical level, with issues that need psychological management. The Jains, for instance, saw in asceticism and physical pain (like the practice of starvation) a way of purifying sin. The Jains accepted that 'vocal sins are destroyed through

silence, mental sins through respiratory restraint, bodily sins through starvation and lust crushed through mortification' (see De La Vallée Poussin 1957:25). The Buddha's reply to the Jains is well presented in the *Devadahasutta* (M iii:214–218). The Buddha's position is clarified with the help of a simile. A man is injured by an arrow that has been smeared with poison. The doctor cuts open the wound and dresses it with medicated powder, so that it will heal. In the process of treatment the painful experiences have to be patiently borne by the injured man. In a similar way, bodily and mental hardships are purely incidental to the following of the eightfold noble path, but the hardships do not become an end in themselves. The Buddha in fact saw that a kind of masochistic undercurrent can feed such asceticism. That is why asceticism of that type (*tapas*) is regarded as an excess. As L De La Vallée Poussin (1957) comments in his observations on suicide and asceticism, 'Buddhism condemns asceticism—any austerity which is likely to weaken body or mind is forbidden'. He also says, 'Buddhism had better methods of crushing lust and destroying sin—the realization of the impermanence of pleasure and of the non-substantiality of the Ego...'.

We may briefly refer to the ethical objections to suicide. During the time of the Buddha, moral dilemmas of the kind that exist today were not live issues and for some of the modern ethical conflicts of today, even a context did not exist. In the way that the current concern with euthanasia is conditioned by the progress of technology, issues pertaining to genetic engineering, terrorism or nuclear war were not of concern at the time. Thus the issue of the value of life and sanctity of life as embedded in the first precept (the destruction of life) was introduced as a basis for the social ethics of the community and a prerequisite for the practice of morality and concentration. I have discussed elsewhere the Buddhist concept of the value of life in relation to vegetarianism, animal liberation and even biotic egalitarianism (de Silva 1998a). There has not been very much discussion on the Buddhist perspectives on euthanasia and suicide, though there has been a great deal of interest in the subject. A discussion by a Buddhist monk who spent a considerable amount of his life as a medical practitioner (before he became a monk) emphasises the condition of consciousness and

mind as different from the purely physical processes; the physical functions are important, as long as they support the operation of the brain stem (Mettananda 1991). The meaning of the term 'life' in grey areas like euthanasia is still being debated, and may have relevance to the ethical implications of 'suicide proper', but in this chapter I wish to shift the discussion to the role of the consciousness and emotions in suicide. In fact, the following observation is made by Mettananda Bhikkhu in his discussions of suicide and euthanasia:

The patient who meditates has a very clear understanding of the value of life even in the moments leading up to their death when they must accept that their life is at an end and let go. It is this valuing of life, especially with a view to the next life, that distinguishes the patient who dies happily from the average patient who commits suicide. Excepting a few cases of self-sacrifice that are related in the Pāli Canon, suicide is strongly criticised by the Buddha (Mettananda 1991:12).

He refers to the strong destructive emotions in suicide:

The problem with suicide is the strong self-destructive wish which exists in the mind of a person who wants to kill himself. Usually those intending suicide have a mind full of anger, of recrimination or of envy and this is the negative emotion which they take with them when they die (Mettananda 1991).

We have gone through the Buddhist critique of suicide from the point of view of *kamma* and dependent origination, the critique of method used for liberation, and the ethical aspects of suicide. I did not go into the details of the ethical condemnation of suicide, such as issues of autonomy and benefit to the community, but merely emphasised the importance of the first precept, the respect for life. I have also briefly mentioned the issue of treatment refusal in euthanasia. The main focus of this chapter is the psychological and existential issues in the study of suicide. It is my contention that one of the most insightful features of the Buddha's understanding of suicide is the peculiar duality of the craving for self-preservation (*bhava taṇhā*) and self-annihilation (*vibhava taṇhā*), which ultimately work within the same framework, in a kind of vicious circle. The ambivalence that emerges in the interplay of these two forms of craving, perhaps, provides a little key to

understanding some of the puzzling facets of this thicket of suicide. This will also help us to reflect on the related human emotions, carrying on this discussion to the controversial issue of the recorded instances of attempted suicide in the Pali *suttas*, the human emotions involved in the attitudes of the suicidal person to the body and the world will receive some pointed analysis. The Buddha advised his son Rahula, 'Make disgust strong in you' (Sn v:340). But he also condemns the unhealthy emotion of loathing (*jeguccha*) the body, by the one who is scared of the body and wishes to destroy the body (M iii:232-233). There is a complex dialectic of emotions like repugnance, disgust and loathing which bear a relationship to a balanced aspiration towards *nibbāna* and the craving for self-annihilation. There is an intricate pathway whereby these emotions are filtered down towards the more aggressive and destructive impulses, as well as the more purifying routes of equanimity.

An interesting conceptual issue is elicited by the debate about the stories of attempted suicide in the Pāli *suttas*, such as those of Siha, Sappadāsa, Vakkali, Godhika and Channa; how far did these cases escape the narrow ridges of eternalism and annihilationism?

Suicide and the three forms of craving

The five groups of clinging that constitute humankind (consciousness, feeling, perception, dispositions and the body) constantly generate pressure for recognition of the self. This reckoning to be 'I' and 'self', while based on clinging, is fed by the strong roots of craving. Craving has three forms, the craving for sensuous gratification (*kāma taṇhā*), the craving for egoistic pursuits (*bhava taṇhā*) and the craving for self-annihilation (*vibhava-taṇhā*). While sensual lust is a dominating impulse in human beings and may even provide at an early stage the muddy waters that can complicate life for a potential suicide, it is the two other forms of craving that are more directly linked to the self notion. When we examine suicides with religious motives, there are people who would visualise a state free of sensual pleasures and the 'prison walls of the mutable body' (see Wettimuny 1978:153), and attempt suicide, for a possible mystic union

with the eternal. Here it is *bhava taṇhā* that is operative, and it is stabilised by the dogma of eternalism and immortality.

If *bhava-taṇhā* is considered as the craving for being and *vibhava taṇhā* as the craving for non-being, it is purely at a very superficial level that they are opposites, as basically they are the contrasting attitudes of a person bound to craving (see de Silva 1976a). Ordinary worldlings get dissatisfied with what they consider as the 'self', and look for a cutting-off or destruction of a not-self, thinking that it is really the destruction of a self. Thus a basic ambiguity is perpetuated. Those who attempt to destroy the self are falsely assuming the existence of a self. Thus the annihilationists who 'lay down the cutting off, destruction, the disappearance of the essential being' are merely 'afraid of their body' and 'keep running and circling round their own body' (M iii:232–233). The situation is well presented in the metaphor of a dog tied to a post by a leash:

Those worthy recluses and brahmans who lay down the cutting off (*ucchedaṃ*), the destruction (*vināsaṃ*), the disappearance of the essential being (*vibhavaṃ*), these afraid of their own body, loathing their own body, simply keep running and circling round their own body...Just as a dog that is tied by a leash to a strong post or stake keeps running and circling round their own body (de Silva 1976a).

People usually 'lean upon this duality' (see Thero 1971:76–80) of 'existence' and 'non-existence'. The person who is on the path of liberation should not fall prey to this thicket of *existential ambiguity*. Both people with annihilationist trends and eternalist trends fall into this thicket and the same person at different times may shift ground from one end of the pole to the other.

At times, the centrality of this basic existential ambiguity has been well emphasised by a few scholars (Wettimuny 1978). Wettimuny who has been very much influenced by the venerable Ñāṇavira (1987), points to this existential thrust between the craving for being and non-being as a part of the very structure of our experience: 'In this way, we find that in the structure of our experience both craving-for-"being" and craving-for-"unbeing" are present, though one may be more *manifest*

than the other depending upon the *nature* of the "being" (Wettimuny 1978:140). He also says that it is because the *puthujjana's* existence is based on a false self that the necessity for unbeing presents itself, and a deception must always lead to betrayal. Thus the pendulum swings from being to un-being and un-being to being, the existential ambiguity, accounting for the kind of ambivalence found in cases of attempted suicide. Edwin Shneidman, one of the foremost suicidologists of recent times, says that the common internal attitude of those suicides known to him may be described as one of ambivalence. He says that though the dichotomous Aristotelian logic does not leave room for ambivalence, in the context of suicide there is a situation that is both A and non-A. The prototypical suicidal state is one in which an individual cuts his throat and cries for help at the same time, and is genuine in both of these acts. This non-Aristotelian accommodation to the psychological realities of mental life is called ambivalence. It is the common internal attitude toward suicide: 'To feel that one has to do it and, simultaneously, to yearn (and even plan) for rescue and intervention' (Shneidman 1985:135). As Shneidman points out, since the writings of Freud came to be known, the position that one could both love and hate at the same time, and simultaneously could wish to die and entertain fantasies of rescue, came to be intelligible to people. What the Buddha sees behind this ambivalence is a more basic existential ambiguity, which attempts to relate our false sense of the self to the craving for being and non-being.

This existential ambiguity is manifested in the different types of polarities people experience between pleasure and pain, love and hate, attachment and repulsion, and they can be well seen in the attitude towards the body. That such contradictory attitudes, like narcissistic self-love and self-hatred, feelings of ego inflation and depression, the desire to live and the desire for annihilation, could all stem from an ego-illusion or a fictional sense of self was one of the greatest existential and psychological insights of the Buddha. According to this line of thought, a Buddhist who listens to the message of the Buddha regarding the nature of suicide could certainly respond with a great deal of depth to what another famous suicidologist says on the subject. Erwin Stengel,

in his well-known work *Suicide and attempted suicide*, makes the following observation: 'The interplay of life-preserving with life-destroying tendencies, or of love and hate, pervades not only relations to other people but also to the self' (Stengel 1983:129).

Suicide and the attainment of arahantship

I have quite deliberately postponed the discussion of certain implications of suicide so far, as it was necessary to present what I feel is the Buddhist contribution to the understanding of suicide first, and then move into the controversial areas. In this section I shall take up for discussion the issue of suicide and *arahants*, and then in the next section address briefly the question of altruistic suicides, with a short reference to some of the socio-cultural variations.

The Buddha makes clear the reasons why suicide is not a solution to human problems. He also brings out reasons why it is not a technique of spiritual progress. I have discussed the most central of these arguments and then pointed out what I feel is the Buddha's lasting existential insight on the issue. But there are some cases cited in the *suttas* which may be considered as exceptions to the rule or as cases that require contextual interpretation.

First, there is the case of the monk Channa who was in great pain. In spite of the fact that Sariputta protested and offered help, food and medicine, the monk Channa committed suicide. But Sariputta says that the monk Channa incurred no blame for this action. As interpreted by the Buddha, the monk 'did not grasp after another body'. 'But whoever, Sariputta, lays down this body and grasps after another body, of him I say he is to be blamed. The monk Channa did not do this; the monk Channa took the knife (to himself) without incurring blame' (M Tr iii:266-67). In fact, the same point is emphasised in the *sutta*, *Ānañjasappāyasutta*, where it is said that grasping of any sort is an obstruction to the attainment of *nibbāna*, even grasping after equanimity (M iii:265).

According to the analysis of suicide we have already made, suicide is an expression of craving and grasping; or to use the language of

Schopenhauer (which is familiar to the Western philosopher), suicide is a subtle expression of the will, or as Schopenhauer felt, it is the most assertive manifestation of the will to live. For some interesting linkages between Schopenhauer and Freud as well as Buddha, see Padmasiri de Silva (1973). Thus at the purely conceptual level, the monk Channa's action transcended and went beyond this existential ambiguity. What appears to be of great interest in the case of the monk Channa and a few other cases to be cited (Godhika, Vakkhali and Sappadāsa) is that, though there is an incipient suicidal impulse that is excited, it is tamed and transformed; psychologically, grasping of any sort (especially of body) is not present, and there is a sense of equanimity with which death or possible death is faced.

An interesting aside to the case of Channa is found in Puṇṇa's meeting with the Buddha, a context given in the *Kindred Sayings*, just following the story of Channa (M iii:267–270; S iv:55–59). First the Buddha advises Puṇṇa how one should deal with objects that excite passion and lust, for if one is not lured by them, nor enamoured by them, and does not cling to them, liberation from ill and suffering is possible. Then Puṇṇa's attention is drawn to the quelling of anger and hatred. After being instructed by the Buddha, Puṇṇa has plans to go and live in the district of Sunāparanta. Then the Buddha says that the people of that district are very fierce and they are bound to abuse and revile Puṇṇa. But Puṇṇa is prepared to meet this with kindness. Then they may throw clods of earth at him, beat him with a stick and lastly, slay him with a sword. Puṇṇa is prepared to face all this with kindness, and on the possible fate of being slain by the people of Sunāparanta, Puṇṇa makes the following comments:

Then, lord, I shall think: 'There are disciples of that Exalted one who, when tormented by, ashamed of, disgusted with, body and life, have resort to stabbing themselves. Now I have come by a stabbing that I never sought'. That is how it will be with me, O Exalted one (S iv:60).

The phrase 'tormented by, ashamed of, disgusted with, body and life' (S iv:60) is a key phrase. In the *Itivuttaka* there is a reference to two types of views: the eternalist who 'sticks fast' to being, and the

annihilationist who, because he is afflicted by becoming, goes to an excess, and overshoots the mark (*atikhāvanti*). Of the second group it is said, '...some are afflicted by becoming, humiliated thereby, and loathing becoming they take pleasure in not-becoming' (Masefield 1994:43). Wettimuny makes an interesting comment on the second kind of response. While the degree of repulsion (*paṭigha*) from being can vary from individual to individual, that state of dissatisfaction has a significance: 'Now, this dissatisfaction and this looking for an escape from 'being', by themselves are quite wholesome things. It is in fact the basis of all authenticity; and set in its proper perspective could become a fruitful approach to the Buddha's teaching' (Wettimuny 1978:143). In fact as Wettimuny points out, the *suttas* indicate an approach of this sort in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (M i:497–501). In the conversation that takes place between the Buddha and the wanderer Dighanaka, three views are cited: (i) everything pleases me; (ii) everything displeases me; (iii) some things please me, some things do not please me. Of the view that everything pleases me, it is said that it is close to passion, close to bondage, close to delight, attachment and grasping. Of the view that nothing pleases me, it is said that it is close to dispassion, to unbinding, not delighting, to detachment and not-grasping (M i:498).

Now the materialist and the pleasure lover (Wettimuny 1978) can entertain annihilationism, but here the aim is to drown himself in the pleasures of the senses. But even the one who loathes becoming may overshoot the mark; there is an authentic turning away, which has to be well directed. If this is so, the very few cases of suicide or attempted suicide of those who at the spur of the moment attain insight, may find some psychological and existential rationale. This initial discontent is something of a philosophical type, which has emerged graphically in works like Kierkegaard's depiction of the dissonance and the total breakdown of the aesthetic life. When such discontent and dissonance emerge, a creative metamorphosis is possible, but it can also find its Nero for burning Rome (de Silva 1976b). It is exactly this insight that is articulated when Ñāṇamoli remarks that 'pain of nausea' provides the 'backstairs to liberation'. He makes a distinction between relative boredom and absolute boredom. The former refers to things like waiting

for a rashly accepted weekend with some dull acquaintances who have to be tolerated. Absolute boredom is different:

Absolute boredom is rather the pain of nausea, it is the loss of one's livelihood for the pianist who loses his hands...it is the Great Drought...the Dark Night of the Soul...Do not try to turn back now—here in the desert perhaps there are doors open—in the cool woods they are overgrown, and in the busy cities they have built over them (Ñāṇamoli 1971:9).

'Disgust with the whole world', *sabba-loke anabhirati* is one of the basic notions necessary for the development of contemplative insight: impurity, death, loathing for food, and disgust with the world, as well as impermanence, suffering, renunciation, dispassion and the cessation of the thirst for life.

The meditation on disgust is like a razor's edge, and if not well directed can lead individuals to go too far. In a collection of *sutta* passages translated and edited by Ñāṇamoli Thera, there is good reference to the practitioners who were misled and went beyond the limits:

They became horrified by their own bodies, humiliated and revolted by them. Just as a woman or man—young, youthful, fond of ornaments with head washed, would be horrified, humiliated and revolted at having hung round her neck the carcase of a snake...so were those bhikkhus horrified, humiliated and revolted by their own bodies. And they both took their own lives and took each other's lives (D iii:289–290).

This message reaches the Buddha and he recommends an alternative discourse on the concentration on breathing:

This respiration-mindfulness concentration, *bhikkhus*, developed and repeatedly practised, is both peaceful and sublime, unadulterated and of happy life—it suppresses evil and unprofitable thoughts as soon as they arise. Just as, *bhikkhus*, in the last month of the hot season, a great rain-cloud causes them to vanish at once and suppress them (Ñāṇamoli 1964:114).

Different types of meditation will suit different types of people and situations. Meditation on the foul and disgusting have to be worked on

a kind of razor's edge, so that they are filtered through the way of equanimity rather than aversion, hatred and revulsion. As Ñāṇaponika Thera so clearly observes:

When insight is deepened and strengthened, what has been called 'disgust' (the Pali term *nibbida*) has no longer the strong emotional tinge of aversion and revulsion, but manifests itself as a withdrawal, estrangement and turning away from worldliness and from the residue of one's own defilements (Ñāṇaponika 1977:16).

The kind of 'disgust' conceptualised in terms of the word *nibbidā* is often translated as weariness, disgust with worldly life, tedium, disenchantment and even with aversion (though the term can be misleading). It is one of the preliminary and conditional states for the attainment of *nibbāna* (see Ñāṇamoli 1977:16). The *Uraga sutta*, which has the image of the snake shedding its old skin, is sometimes used as a simile to describe the kind of 'disgust' conceptualised by the word *nibbidā*:

...the snake feels *disgust* towards its old skin when the sloughing is not yet complete and parts of the old skin still adhere to its body. Similarly, the disgust felt towards residual attachments and defilements will give to the disciple an additional urgency in his struggle for final liberation. Such disgust is a symptom of his growing detachment (Ñāṇamoli 1977:15).

In the *Psalms of the Brethren* we get the story of Sappadāsa, who, being overwhelmed by defilements, could not achieve concentration and pointedness of mind. This distressed him so much that he entertained thoughts of self-destruction, and an inward vision gradually expanded and led to the attainment of arahantship:

...And now the blade was drawn
Across my throat to cut the artery...
When lo in me arose the deeper thought:
Attention to the fact and to the cause.
The misery of it all was manifest;
Distaste, indifference the mind possessed,
And so my heart was set at liberty (Th Tr 214).

Like the case of Channa and Sappadāsa to which we have referred, there are similar citations, Siha, Vakkali, Godhika and Mahānāma. The stories are brief. Vakkali appears in slightly different forms in two contexts (S iii:118–124; Th 349–354). As potential case studies the material found in the *suttas* is limited. All of them in general provide us with a type of suicide where suicidal impulses are transformed into dispassion, and insight into the nature of reality is attained. Reading through the writings of Ñāṇavīra Thera, the book of letters and reflections called, *Clearing the path*, is a path that will take you through this narrow ridge which I have taken pains to describe and analyse. When going through the book, I am sure that readers will have a variety of responses, for the work appears to be very insightful and a little eccentric at the same time. The poignant story of a Buddhist monk who grappled with the thoughts of suicide, while being so much intensely absorbed in the *dhamma*, naturally presents a great challenge: I shall not stop here to discuss suicide in the light of the *dhamma*, except to remark that though it is never encouraged it is not the heinous offence it is some times popularly thought to be, and that the consequences of the act will vary according to circumstances—for the *puthujjana* they can be disastrous but for the arahant (the venerable Channa Thera) they are nil (Ñāṇavīra 1987:219–220).

Altruistic suicide

Emile Durkheim was the first to use the term 'altruistic suicide' in the sociological studies of suicide, where he distinguished three types of suicide. First is egoistic suicide, which is the outcome of a lack of integration of the individual to society. Second is altruistic suicide, which occurs when the individual's life is rigorously governed by custom and habit: 'it results from the individual's taking his own life because of higher commandments, either those of religious sacrifice or unthinking political allegiance' (Durkheim 1951:15). The third is anomic suicide, which is due to the lack of regulation of the individual by society, so that the person is isolated from society. Durkheim held that all societies have a collective tendency towards suicide, depending on their social structure. Today, there is a philosophical issue as to whether these

sacrificial and altruistic suicides should be called 'suicide', as they are other-regarding, not self-regarding (see Regan 1980:85). The notion of altruistic suicide has widened from the context in which Durkheim wrote. A typical example may be given from lifeboat ethical situations. Suppose a lifeboat will not sustain the number of people who scramble aboard, and some must die in order that others live. A person of advanced years and questionable health, without the ability to swim, voluntarily jumps overboard, drowning immediately. A life has been sacrificed for the welfare of others.

Some philosophers do not wish to use the term 'suicide' to describe this situation, as it is regarded as 'other-regarding' as opposed to 'self-regarding'.

In general, moral dilemmas of this type did not emerge during the time of the Buddha. I have discussed elsewhere the possible Buddhist perspectives on moral dilemmas (see de Silva 1976b:30–45; 1988). Briefly, ethics are merely a stage on the path to liberation and there is no need to build a kind of heroic ethic into the system. Working for the welfare of others through compassion, certain types of self-sacrifice and risk-taking for the benefit of others, fearlessness of facing the truth and kindred virtues take an important place in Buddhism. Risk to one's life in certain situations or even accepting death may be understood and declared free of blemish and defilement according to the word of the Buddha, depending on the context. But the killing of oneself for the sake of others is not something that the Buddha would build into the system. The term 'altruistic suicide' is a little jarring, as altruistic acts are good and risk-taking is merely incidental, and a Buddhist may not convert altruistic suicide into a special creed.

Secondly, apart from the Buddhist perspectives on ethical dilemmas, the word 'altruism' also has a unique usage in Buddhism. Firstly, Buddhism does not advocate self-denying altruism associated with suicide, asceticism and self-harm. Secondly, the opposition between egoism and altruism gets diffused due to the Buddhist analysis of the self (see Perett 1987). Both of these points have been discussed by scholars. The point has been well described by Steven Collins:

...the rationale for action which acceptance of Buddhism furnishes provides neither for simple self-interest nor for self-denying altruism. The attitude to all 'individualities', whether past and future 'selves', past, future or contemporary 'others' is the same-loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity...Buddhism conceives as part of (the qualitative notion of personal identity) a version of rational action which includes necessarily the dimension of altruism (Collins 1982:193-194).

The action of the Buddhist monks in Vietnam who set fire to themselves to protest against war, even if it defies the description of suicide, may be hard to justify on Buddhist grounds. Even if this is raised to an ideal state of a symbolic act, done with equanimity, does the context bear that description? Basically, one has to be extremely careful in trying to find Buddhist grounds for altruistic suicide.

Buddhism was the philosophy of the middle path in many senses. That is why the Buddha condemned the deliberate infliction of pain on oneself as unprofitable, while also condemning the way of pure sensuality as unprofitable (M i:393-396). Thus acts of self-sacrifice have to be judged in their own context without converting self-denying altruism into a special creed. To use the terminology of J C Flugal, religions of health and vitality will walk the middle way between narcissism and nemesisism, the narrow ridge between eternalism and annihilationism. Suicide may have different cultural varieties and ritual expressions, as Durkheim pointed out, but the Buddhist focus on suicide is basically from its orientation to the liberation from suffering (*dukkha*). It is because Buddhism is a middle path that as a general philosophy of life and as a way of liberation from suffering suicide is not accepted as a worthy way of responding to the problems of life. As a way of liberation from suffering, the difficult problem emerges, as the struggle for liberation and disgust with the world may not always be blended with dispassion and equanimity. The passion for liberation may get filtered down into an extreme position. But this may yet have the potential for transformation, dispassion, equanimity and insight. Perhaps our struggle to understand the suicide of the monk Channa and the writings of Ñāṇavīra Thera show that though the practising Buddhist is

well equipped with a good critique of eternalism, he needs a more subtle and complex critique of annihilationism.

Identity profiles, communal violence and ethics

For those who are beset with the sense of incongruity, disharmony, suffering and tribulation embedded in the human predicament, the Buddha has a perennial message; and for those who make a temporary pact with the social order, attempting to find the Buddha's distinctive contribution to the development of social relationships, the ideals of righteous government and inter-group harmony, there is a message of sorts. Some have found the insights into society and polity revealing and useful; others have even constructed socio-political orientations for guiding and enhancing political and social activity.

It has struck me over the years that there appears to be a kind of interim, provisional or even transient quality in the norms that we use to deal with questions pertaining to society and polity. There is a great deal taxing our imagination and reason; situations and contexts demand special attention, the spirit of what we do emerges as more important than ethical rules, and conflicting alternatives agonise our conscience. The Buddha's own teachings about morality, society and polity have no fundamentalism or absolutism; they have a restrained pragmatic outlook that does not yet embrace complete value relativism. This is a significant point in the context of our times, as the world in which the Buddha lived was greatly different to ours. The complexities of our times were not present in their intensity and extent. In formulating a lay ethic, he was not disturbed by anything like nuclear war, genetic engineering, artificially manipulated sex changes, biomedical and population ethics and, more crucially, anything like the sporadic brands of insurgency and terrorism found today. The ethics of intervening and managing questions of this sort evolve within crisis situations and dilemmas. It is true that the Buddha has a very rational and analytical critique of caste and its application to race and other group concepts (de Silva 1987), including a frank compassionate, considerate and tolerant view of other religions (de Silva 1985a). But even minority

issues of the kind that plague us today did not exist at that time. This is an important point for reflection.

Discussing minorities in Buddhist politics, we can present some of the very rational and analytic inquiries that the Buddha has made regarding irrational group concepts like caste and race; we can also cite the *Discourse on the parable of the water snake* (M Tr sutta 22), which brings in the parable of the raft: the *dhamma* is like a raft meant for crossing the river, not for carrying on your shoulders after crossing the river; it is not meant to be converted into a label, an ornament, a bone of intellectual contention, a moribund institution or an object of infatuation and conceit. We can also focus attention on the duality that in spite of the great doctrinal contribution, socio-historical data clearly illustrate the tremendous distortions, reversals and contradictions found in practice. I am interested in a third dimension—the tension points, the conflicts, the dilemmas, which emerge as doctrinal resources encounter problematic social realities. Conceptualisation of these issues in relation to two problem areas is the main focus of this chapter. First, I shall deal with the logic of identity profiles, which is more than a set of emerging dilemmas, it is a veritable tangle; the second problem area is the ‘dilemmatic’, for it has reference to the norms of managing inter-group conflicts and violence.

It is possible that over the years, when the *dhamma* of the Buddha got transformed into Buddhism, some of the penetrating insights of the Buddha were submerged, and there is a need for the great process of ‘unlearning’ accumulated pathways to Buddhism so that one can correctly grasp the doctrine (to use the metaphor of the water snake). The conflict between an idealism and a realism provides the larger canvas, on which are charted the dilemmas of our times.

As a conceptual study, this chapter will focus on the nature of certain important questions that have a bearing on minority issues:

- there are issues pertaining to the reality or unreality of entities like nations, groups and individuals and the nature of individual or personal identities as well as corporate identities. I am concerned

about the nature of identity profiles and the logical and analogical extensions from personal identities to corporate identities;

- there are questions relating to the nature of rights and wrongs, justification and condemnation, the evaluation of means to ends, the norms of conflict management, and so on. These cover the norms and ethics that guide us in our routine activity as well as exceptional situations;
- there are issues pertaining to the methodology of settling and managing conflict as well as the seeking of long-term diagnostic paths.

This chapter is concerned basically with the first two questions and in a very limited way with the implications for the third question. While there is a great need for the collection of facts, which is a fundamental concern of the social scientist, there is also a need for occasional attempts to clarify the logic of different types of questions, questions concerning concepts and norms as well as facts. Minority issues are complex, and it is always useful to keep in mind the logic of different types of questions that have a bearing on this problem.

Identity profiles and inter-group conflicts

My analysis is basically rooted in the Sri Lankan experience of group conflicts. Sri Lanka is a multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic community with conflicting profiles of collective identities. Within the major religious orientations of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, as well as the ethnic groups, Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim, the concept of Sinhala-Buddhist identity has been the subject of prolonged discussion, and especially so in the context of Sinhala-Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka. The practice of religion often results in the formation of communities and collectivities. The relationship between such a community and another religious community can generate tension and conflict. In general, during the recent years, conflict between religious groups has been minimal, but ethnic conflicts have been prominent. In understanding inter-group ethnic conflicts between the Sinhala and

Tamils, perception of group identities is the crucial point: 'The real dilemma concerning the relation between the two communities lies in the mutually conflicting historical perceptions they have of their own and each others' identity' (Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam and Coomaraswamy 1983:149).

In general, the teachings of the Buddha present a critique of personal identity, which is one of the deepest and richest facets of the doctrine, though its logical implications for what may be called collective identities at the doctrinal level have not been very much probed. There are interesting logical strands in the Buddhist concept of personal identity that can aid the understanding of collective identities, both in the context of the doctrine and in that of history.

Historically, in the development of many nation states, there were stages of re-examination of roots and heritage, and thus we developed the uneasy drift from cultural diversity to ethnocentrism. The movement towards modernity by the revitalisation of tradition leaves its own vestiges, where healthy pride in heritage can be converted into fanaticism. The semantic bridge between healthy national pride and fanaticism has become hazy and clouded and has to be penetrated by the process of continuous self-criticism. The discussion that follows attempts to unravel some points of tension both at the doctrinal level and for real situations.

Two conflicting strands in our identity profiles

According to the Buddhist diagnosis of human suffering, the deepest roots of suffering arise from the futile attempt to preserve a false conception of the self with its attendant diverse forms of self-identifications. The five-fold identifications emerging from corporeality—feeling, perception, ideas, dispositions and consciousness—manifest in four different ways, thus generating 20 kinds of personality beliefs. The ideologies that feed forms of group identifications, and the feelings and desires that feed ideologies (*diṭṭhi*) have a central place in the Buddhist analysis of conflicts. Also the emergence of fear, anxiety and aggression in terms of defence

mechanisms have been discussed in works on the psychology of Buddhism (see de Silva 1979:94–97; Johanson 1983).

In spite of all these complex forms of identification, these identity manifestations are seen as a part of a grand illusion. So are we a kind of protoplasm without a sense of direction, purpose and goals?

On the one hand, the doctrine of egolessness focusses attention on indeterminacy, ambiguity and formlessness in human existence: '...the basic indeterminacy of the human creature, the ambiguity and formlessness at the centre of their lives, and with their tendency to try to fix their identity upon some cluster of transient identifications with which they become involved in learning to live in a particular time and place' (Jacobson 1966:61). On the other hand, within the ruins and the debris of the illusion, we have to generate a lifestyle without falling into the traps of these transient identifications. The dissolution of the ego does not imply a diminution of one's co-ordinating and cognitive powers. We must find a way between the paths of chaos and nihilism and the traps of identity illusions, dissolving or transcending them as we cut across their inner dialectic. The reality of personal identities, of group identities, can easily lose the way, and to steer clear of the traps is the greatest challenge.

Joseph Tamney raises the question whether a strong religious identity prevents a person from developing an identity with a non-religious nation state. This duality can be seen in more technical contexts, such as the contemporary encounter between psychotherapy and Buddhism. While psychotherapy considers the 'lack of a self' as a besetting problem, Buddhist psychologists find the presence of a self a crucial problem. While the therapeutic issue in psychotherapy is how to regrow a basic sense of the self, the therapeutic issue in Buddhism is to see through the illusion. The conflict between the illusionist and integrative notions of identity formation runs through not merely the issues of personal identity but also issues of corporate identity.

In the Western clinical scene today, the inability to feel a real or cohesive being represents a disorder of the self. In the Buddhist context,

heightened, over-done and bolstered up identities generate the many forms of fixation, anxiety, fear and aggression. Perhaps this is an apparent duality only and the tension between the two ways of looking at personal identity would dissolve at a deeper level. The two goals need not be mutually exclusive. To present the situation in a simple way, the acceptance of the doctrine of egolessness does not imply that people should not struggle with the notion of 'Who am I?'. The case has been well presented in this manner:

If as Buddhism teaches, I do not have a self and am not a self, and if I should abandon all identifications based on any sense of the self, this is often misrepresented to mean I do not need to struggle with the task of identity formation or with finding out who I am, what my capacities are, what my needs are, what my responsibilities are, how I am related to other selves... (Enger 1981).

There should be no premature abandonment of essential psychosocial tasks. I have laboured to bring out this point as it provides logical extensions to the understanding of collective identities in the context of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, where Buddhism considers forms of group conceits as extensions of the personal ego. To examine the inroads of self-pathology as manifestations of group identity, we can work out a tentative typology:

- i) bolstered-up identity profiles emerging on conceits and narcissistic self images;
- ii) strands of thinking presenting the illusionist profile of collective identities;
- iii) the ever-recurring struggle to maintain critical and interim unities;
- iv) nihilistic identity profiles (like terrorism and certain forms of insurgency) heading towards chaos and anomie.

The inevitable tension between (ii) and (iii) present fascinating terrain for the study of collective identity profiles in the context of Buddhism. It may be limited to elitist perceptions of a complex kind or doctrinal analysis, but it is a central concern of the norms about identity formation,

norms that have to guide us in the encounter between doctrinal Buddhism and problematic social realities.

What are the forms of collective identifications in the Sri Lankan context that deeply concern us here?

- group identifications in terms of religion;
- group identifications in terms of ethnic links;
- group identifications in terms of language.

Cultural symbols and activities may be linked to religion and ethnicity distinctly or be common to both, bringing them together. Territorial concentration of people or the sense of physical space as in Sri Lanka adds intensity to ethnic cleavages (see de Silva 1984b). A sense of history is a strong ingredient in group identity profiles, operating through myth, literature, stereotypes. A sense of power, especially political power, and also economic competition can generate conflict between groups, religious or ethnic. Physical appearance and language do not always signify ethnic or religious difference. The psychology of mutual suspicion, fear, anxiety and the ever-recurrent cycle of defence mechanisms generate the conflicting identity profiles between Sinhala and Tamil people in Sri Lanka.

What is the place of Buddhism in either generating or minimising conflicts between ethnic groups or religious groups? In general the multi-religious scene today in Sri Lanka provides an optimistic picture, as religious harmony is present to a very great degree. In the past, Buddhism in its more popular forms had integrated some facets of Hinduism, and in general the Hindu–Buddhist axis does not generate religious conflict. Buddhist–Christian conflicts have been evident in the past, with problems emerging since the colonial period. Militant Buddhism did confront Christianity at several points in history. But today, Buddhist–Christian or Buddhist–Islamic confrontations are rare. The major problem confronting Sri Lanka is Sinhala–Tamil conflict.

On this subject, there have been various strands of Buddhist thought, some aggravating the communal issues and others minimising them.

The major aggravating factor has been the celebrated concept of Buddhist-Sinhala identity (see Roberts 1979:63–64). Though all Sinhala people are not Buddhists, the vast majority of Buddhists are Sinhala. There has thus been ethnicisation of Buddhism exemplified by the Tamil terrorist attack on the Sirimaha Bodhiya (Sacred Bo Tree) in Anuradhapura, a place that is symbolic for Buddhists.

The tendency to identify Buddhism with Sinhala people creates certain incongruities at the doctrinal level. In the words of a Buddhist who does not accept this narrow notion of the Sinhala-Buddhist identity:

Among the Sinhalese this racial consciousness was bolstered by an ideology that developed quite early in [the 20th] century. This treats the Sinhala as a very special people whose duty is to protect the Buddhist religion—a duty more or less to be exercised through the state (Palihawadana 1985).

Of course this kind of collective conceit is also found among the Tamils. The same writer comments: 'One reason why the ethnic problem is intractable in Sri Lanka is that...the Sinhalese and the Tamils cherish the same kind of intransigent spirit' (Palihawadana 1985).

The difficult conceptual question here is that as a Buddhist rejects these narrow, conceit-oriented identities and rejects the formation of many identities as illusory, what can be put in their place? How do we cope with the historical reality that such groups are recognised? Do we acknowledge heritage and legal and social status?

The notion that the terms 'Sinhala' and 'Tamil' are mere labels, and that on rational investigations, these distinctions dissolve has been propagated by E W Adikaram for years. Influenced by the writings of the great Indian sage Krishnamurthi, Adikaram even sees the word 'Buddhist' as a label, but perhaps as a more serious type of 'label' conventionally used to describe those who are exploring the veracity of the teachings of the Buddha.

A supplementary but slightly different angle is found in the work of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and its crusade against communalism by inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogues and

community organisations (see Katz 1987). The movement's leader, A T Aryaratne, has been the recipient of a number of international awards and Adikaram won the UN Peace Prize. Not only do they offer alternatives to a narrow ethic of the Sinhala-Buddhist identity, but interestingly, they offer contrasting (but complementary) attitudes to the resolution of the ethnic issue. Adikaram is a thinker and he, like Krishnamurthi, emphasises the misperception of reality as the main cause of ethnic conflicts or any other conflicts. Aryaratne is a social worker and tries to deal with the interim unities he confronts and shapes through communal and inter-group activity. Perhaps we need both approaches to heal the dualities.

There are many more approaches, constructive and destructive, to the question of communal harmony. There is a danger in making blanket statements about Sinhala, Tamil, Buddhist and other identities. 'It is extremely difficult to make large-scale statements about the beliefs of whole peoples' (Ling 1979). What we can discern are strands of dominant thinking that are politically effective, strands of dramatic impressions articulated during crisis times, critical and creative viewpoints.

Having discussed the nature of identity profiles oriented towards the person as well as the group and having articulated possible and actual Buddhist approaches to dealing with identity issues, we must remember that people can be overwhelmed by the momentum of events. Sometimes we cannot do what is ideal or desirable, only what is possible (see de Silva 1983; Samarasinghe 1985).

Whilst we try to convey that ethnic identities such as Sinhala and Tamil have no rationality, no scientific basis and are illusory labels, we have to realistically intervene in competing group claims about human rights, regional autonomy, access to education, employment ratios and so on. Though we reject these identity profiles as illusory, we hear the voice of communal grievance, mutual debate, justifications and condemnations, physical threats, sporadic expressions of terrorism, claims for separation, not to mention the requirements for the defence of the country. This is a dilemma of our times. We try to dissolve these

identity profiles and yet we recognise them and mediate in terms of these concepts.

What I have presented here is not a horizontal, historical sketch of the birth and development of 'national identity' (Pye 1962), but rather the logical and analogical extensions of personal identity to corporate identity. In this study the sense of history is merely a background.

The ethics of managing violence and terrorism

Ethics are not the ultimate realm of human realisation, they are a step on the way. By implication, the conflicting options for actions and their moral evaluation are also a part of the complexities of life, may be a facet of *dukkha*. The therapeutic stance of Buddhism—'Why do people get into problematic situations?'—is even more crucial than 'How do we solve this particular problematic situation?'.

Sidney Hook responded to this criticism, agreeing to a wider definition of different definitions of the 'tragic', but was quite firm in his comments on Buddhist pacifism (personal correspondence 1971). This problem haunts us still. Questions of nuclear warfare, terrorism and global conflicts have placed great strains on our traditional value systems. Hook's sense of the 'tragic' in life has gradually come into the centre of our lives. Today the great question is the feasibility of the morally required policy options, the tension between the desirable and the possible.

In the more academically-oriented study of ethics too we discern some interesting shifts. The traditional ethics of the Greeks as well as the ethics found in religious systems may be described as normative ethics, which deal with life ideals, prescriptions for happiness, codes of conduct and so on. During more recent times there has emerged what has been called 'meta ethics', which has been neutral on normative matters, but dissects and analyses the meaning of ethical concepts like 'good' and 'bad' and the role of moral language (see also Bok 1979). A more recent trend focussing on the complexity of situations and their relative uniqueness has generated a need for what may be called 'situational ethics'. The interest in dilemma is a facet of the focus on

situations, but it is more concerned with the conflict of existing rules or ethical concepts generated by the complexities of modern society.

I wish to cite a particular work that is concerned with the 'ethical dilemmas that face policy-makers and governments of developing countries in their effort to manage the process of development' (Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam and Coomaraswamy 1983).

It is a study of ethical dilemmas in relation to development in a number of Asian countries. Ethical dilemmas arise out of the inescapable choices we have to make, and whatever alternative we opt for, there is a loss of values. Empowerment and commitment are infused into development, but the dilemmas worry us: 'The management of a crisis in law and order will entail some denial of democratic freedoms; the rediscovery of cultural identity can heighten ethnic antagonisms in the pluralistic society...' (Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam and Coomaraswamy 1983:1). According to the authors, development dilemmas have an intrinsic ethical content—a component of human values that demand specific responses in the management of the development process. Such choices are not value neutral, and cannot be 'based exclusively on technoeconomic criteria' (Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam and Coomaraswamy 1983:2).

Traditional cultures have their own ethical frameworks. For instance, the statecraft of Justinian and Dharmasoka illustrate the manner in which the 'ethos of two different civilisations grappled with the dilemmas of secular law and spiritual order' (Gunatilleke, Tiruchelvam and Coomaraswamy 1983). Contemporary states are faced with more complex issues but ethical issues cannot be neglected or avoided.

Violence in the context of the study cited above is the use of force for the resolution of conflicts in society that mainly originate from sociopolitical, economic and cultural factors. When the state has to deal with such violence, certain ethical norms influence the actions of those who govern the country. Criminal actions come under the normal need for law and order. But ethnic violence can be mixed up with a number of other factors, such as economics, and nihilistic attempts to create disorder. The evaluation of ethnic violence becomes difficult in

such cases. Ethnic violence is often justified in terms of an unjust social and economic order that has to be changed.

Buddhist ethics leave no place for the use of violence. But states governed by Buddhists often use force for the maintenance of the state authority. Serious ethical issues do emerge for these governments when they have to deal with forms of collective violence and terrorism. Human lives may be lost in these operations.

But I cannot understand how anyone can reasonably deny that if *X* is confronted by a situation in which his refusal to take the life of a hate-crazed maniac would result in the horrible destruction of thousands of innocent creatures...then *X* is co-responsible for the death of these creatures, providing of course that this is the only way this death can be prevented (Sidney Hook, personal correspondence).

This is why we find the philosophy of non-violence put under the greatest strain today. The world is not arranged in such a way that non-violence will automatically triumph because it is the right way (Smith 1969:158). It is true that non-violence always has a moral superiority and that 'it retains this superiority even when it fails to achieve the political or social goal to which it is directed' (Smith 1969). In fact, someone like Socrates or Gandhi would say that material loss or physical harm consequent on upholding high moral principles is not a loss in the real sense of the word, but a gain indeed. Yet, people who are immersed in the worst forms of violence cannot respond to such magnanimity.

Alternative paths

Now that I have briefly presented the dilemmatic context in the face of collective forms of violence and the duty of the state to handle this situation, let me present some of the alternative paths for reflection and action.

There are many alternative ways of dealing with ethical dilemmas. While the many types of ethical dilemmas may have some structural similarity, the one relating to violence, killing and terrorism is the main

concern of this analysis. Looking at the ethics of handling collective violence, there are a number of alternatives that deserve consideration. While some of them may conflict with one another, some of them are not mutually exclusive, and may be combined.

- There is the way of Socrates and Gandhi, where material loss consequent to holding high moral principles is not considered a loss at all.
- Non-violence may be considered as a way of life rather than a strategy for intervention in a crisis situation. It cannot always be a moral principle, a strategy for action and a way of life. To say that both non-violence and violence are ways of life does not help us with a way out of the immediate problem, but rather point towards its long-term diagnostic function.
- Sometimes the intensity of a conflict can be minimised or eliminated by changing the slogans or the paradigms of confrontation (de Silva 1985b). A lot of violence is generated by an exclusive concern with human rights. A new paradigm of human relations based on care and concern rather than rights is an interesting approach.
- Marcus Singer (1985), looking at ethical dilemmas in the context of terrorism, says that there is a difference between a moral problem and a moral issue. A moral problem arises out of conflicting considerations about what is right or wrong; it concerns decision and resolution. It is the realm in which dilemmas emerge.

When there are disputes and controversies, there are threats, intimidation, terrorism. Then society has a problem. A purely ethical issue becomes a social issue when controversy degenerates into conflict. Settlement, rather than decision, is the key word here. This is a most stimulating approach, not merely at the conceptual level, but also at the practical level. Today, certain ethical dilemmas get converted into social issues. Putting settlement in the place of moral resolution (in certain contexts) brings together the anti-fundamentalism of Buddhism and creative pragmatism (in Hook's sense of the term).

- There is the approach of Søren Kierkegaard to ethical dilemmas, which has its parallel in Buddhist thought. Life has to be seen in the terms of a complete scheme of liberation and not merely an exclusive focus on the ethical. Kierkegaard saw it in terms of three stages, the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. By its nature the ethical may generate dilemmas, and this happens when it is taken in isolation. The ethical has to be transcended by the religious. It is difficult to translate this kind of discourse into the context of practical decisions, but perhaps his view is closest to that of Socrates and Gandhi.

In fact the Buddha would consider, in a deeper sense, that the dilemmatic in ethics and life, as a subtle facet of *dukkha*, is an in-built feature of the human predicament. This is an answer of sorts to Sidney Hook's query. It is a useful supplementary attitude that (if not taken in a defeatist way) can be a corrective to the feelings of omnipotence that human beings develop. Perhaps in the ever-recurring forms of these dilemmas we see a deeper ingredient of the Buddhist concept of *dukkha* in a modern setting.

- We make a case for confronting violence, even the possible destruction of human lives (as limited as possible, but unavoidable). A person can select the lesser evil. We may find some refuge in law rather than ethics, or even work out analogies with euthanasia and other related issues. A person chooses such an approach for personal reasons rather than trying to be moral in a complex world. This is perhaps a theme similar to the *Bhagavad Gita*.
- There is finally the common sense approach, which comes close to the Buddhist notion of non-violence being a way of life. If people practise the ethics and the morals available in the non-dilemmatic area and uphold the simple virtues of honesty, truthfulness, respect for life, dignity and the others' property and so on. (notions common to all world religions), the dilemmatic may be minimised or eliminated. We create problems and then search for solutions.

The case for killing or destroying human life in the exceptional situation finds an interesting and almost a dramatic expression in the *Bhagavad Gita*. On the discussion of war and peace in the *Bhagavad*

Gita, there have been four important interpretations regarding Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna in the battlefield as to whether the *Gita* enjoins violent or non-violent action.

- Both Gandhi and Radakrishnan feel that the concept of the battlefield is a metaphor or allegory; there is no literal injunction to declare war: 'I felt that it (the *Gita*) was not a historical work but that under the guise of physical warfare it described the duel that perpetually went on in the hearts of mankind, and that physical warfare was brought in merely to make the description of the internal duel more alluring' (Upadhyaya 1969).
- There is the idea that the war is merely used as a historical background, the setting of the *Mahabharata*. The blemish of the canvas should not be attributed to the picture in the mind of the painter. This view is attributed to Nataraja Guru.
- The *Gita* preaches war and violence without reservations, and we have to take the contents of the *Gita* in the literal and not in the allegorical sense. Karl Potter and K N Jayatilleke support this viewpoint.
- War is prescribed by the *Gita* for Arjuna only because it happens to be one of the sacred duties of a *kṣatriya* in a special circumstance. In keeping with the ideal of duty for duty's sake, the *Gita* upholds that a warrior following his royal duty and a contemplative sage following the duty of a recluse reach the same goal. It is not a reckless aggression but a righteous war. It is not to be fought with anger but with a sense of duty. This view is upheld by K N Upadhyaya, who says that the *Gita* sanctions the righteous war, fought with equanimity and in exceptional situations.

With the conceptual framework of the ethics of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the ethics of Buddhism can be perceived two paradigms for moral issues in the human setting today. The *Bhagavad Gita* presents an ethic of rights and duties, while the Buddhist ethic is one of compassion and care. The first is a morality of rights based on equality and fairness, the second is an ethic of responsibility based on equity and recognition of

differences in need. The *Bhagavad Gita* enjoins what may technically be called a deontological ethic and Buddhism enjoins what may be called the ethics of consequences and ends. The same kind of tension is found in the discussion on the ethics of nuclear warfare. There is of course a tension between a deontological morality and an ethic of consequence.

These are two doctrines that cannot capture precisely and comprehensively the Hindu-Buddhist ethico-cultural orientations. But their complementary fusion perhaps provides a basis for a common mission: to reduce the tensions and the violence around us.

Today Sri Lanka is poised between a political solution to minority issues and a military solution. But if we look at the situation critically, we have to make a distinction between the minority issue and the terrorist menace. The minority issue can yet be resolved or managed through a political solution, but confronting terrorism is politically difficult. It is not a phenomenon limited to Sri Lanka, but an international phenomenon.

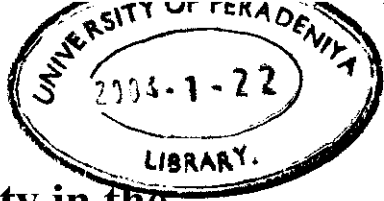
The *Bhagavad Gita* has the concept of a warrior to provide doctrinal resources for a military solution to terrorism, while the Buddhist ethic faces the strains of a dilemma in this context. Perhaps I have to agree with Sidney Hook, at least on one point—the dilemmatic in ethics and life today form a central facet of the Buddhist concept of *dukkha*.

Concluding thoughts

In face of the dilemmatic, Western diplomacy has moved from what is called idealism to a sort of realism. From traditional ethics comes the notion of prudence as a cardinal virtue:

prudence as an operative political principle was not the rigid formulation or precise definition of what was right or wrong but a method of practical reason in the search for righteousness and justice under a given set of circumstances. Practical morality involves the reconciliation of what is morally desirable and politically possible (Thompson 1984).

In folk tradition, there is the notion of wisdom that is relevant to the occasion, and in the Buddhist tradition, there is a notion of skill in means. Along these lines, an ethic structured for contextual skills is yet to be born and the dilemmatic in life will go on.



The concept of equality in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition

The importance of the concept of equality in the modern world is juxtaposed with a rising interest in the doctrine of human rights. One facet of this interest has been the discussion whether human rights are in fact universal and whether they are relevant to non-Western societies with different cultural and religious traditions. While this chapter will focus attention on the Theravāda Buddhist tradition, we shall be concerned with the following questions.

- Concepts of equality vary in different historical contexts particularly within the framework of religious and ethical systems. What variables give specific form and shape to Buddhist reflections on equality? What is the kind of world view that gives meaning and direction to Buddhist thinking on the subject of equality and related concepts? How is the concept of equality in the Buddhist tradition grounded and where does it fit into the Buddhist perspective?
- While being aware of these specific variables, do we discern a clear profile about Buddhist thinking on the subject? The sermons of the Buddha (first preserved in an oral tradition and written down later) offer diverse contexts of relevant material. What is the total impact when these contexts are put together?
- Is there a kind of perennial philosophy in these texts that links historical and modern times? If discussions on equality today in the West are subject to ethnocentric bias and if rethinking on the conceptualisation of human rights is necessary, what contributions can a forum on equality in the religious and cultural traditions of Asia make to the ongoing debate?

It may not be possible to discuss all these questions in detail, but if all are addressed, we should make some progress.

It is becoming increasingly evident that the Western political philosophy upon which the [UN] Charter and Declaration [of Human

Rights] are based provides only one particular interpretation of human rights, and that this Western notion may not be successfully applicable to non-Western areas for several reasons...cultural differences whereby philosophic underpinnings defining human nature and the relationship of individuals to others and to society are markedly at variance with Western individualism (Pollis and Schwab 1979:1).

It is worthwhile noting here that Buddhism is a perspective with an ethical and spiritual message; its reflections are focussed not on the limited lifespan of an individual or society but on the cycle of existence where concepts of rebirth and *kamma* figure prominently. Above the ever-changing socio-political order, there is a cosmic order. Human rights, like the rights to life and security, emerge through concepts of obligation and duties in the Buddhist context. Buddhism emphasises the role of the individual for the purpose of attaining liberation, but the idea of reciprocity and reciprocal human relations (as found in the paradigmatic *Sigālovāda sutta*) introduces the framework of mutual obligations. Questions of human needs and freedom are examined in the light of a central ideal—the blend of material and spiritual progress. While Buddhism has universal concerns relating to human rights that converge on the Western pursuit, these variables add a special flavour to Buddhist thinking on human rights in general and equality in particular.

The fact that Buddhist reflections on equality, especially those pertaining to caste and women, are grounded in ethico-religious contexts has, however, been misunderstood by some, giving the idea that they have little socio-political relevance. It is true that the vibrant centre of the Buddha's teaching was an ethical and religious message, but paradoxically this makes its relevance for social transformation even greater. The Buddhist concept of equality has a strong moral flavour. Finally, as compassion and benevolence played a great role in the Buddhist attitude to people's problems, the approach to human rights is basically humanistic rather than legalistic.

The following discussion will fall into two parts: a section dealing with Buddhist world view and reflections on equality, and another dealing with the dimensions of equality, such as the analysis of the

place of caste and women in Buddhist thought. In the concluding section we shall briefly sum up the direction of our discussion and point towards a more constructive pathway.

The Buddhist world view and the concept of equality

Religion can be so deeply integrated into everyday life, as in ancient India, that it is difficult to isolate it as a distinct phenomenon. In the context of the Buddhist tradition, it is not limited to a ritual, ethical or social practice but involves a world view that pervades diverse aspects of life. Before the appearance of Islam, Hindu tradition and Buddhism presented relatively different world views, though there were points of convergence between them.

Sramanism and Brahmanism represent the two great religious philosophies of India in ancient times. The sources of early Brahmanism include the *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas*, and the oldest, *Upaniṣads*. The non-Vedic origin of the *Upaniṣads* has been a point of great controversy (Joshi 1973). It has been suggested that *yoga*, *Sāṃkhya*, early Jainism and some of the extraordinary ideas of the *Upaniṣads* had a common sramanic origin (Joshi 1973). The great doctrines concerning *yoga*, *dhyāna*, *karma*, *ahimsa*, *mokṣa* and *samsāra* seem to have been the legacy of *munis* or *sramanas*, 'ascetic sages'. Sakyamuni the great *sramaṇa* disregarded the priestly ritualism, the sacrifices and the system of fixed castes (*vannas*). Over the years in India, the distinctiveness of these traditions became confused because of the strong integrative power of Hinduism, and especially with the emergence of the Vedānta of Sankara certain blends between Sramanism and Brahmanism emerged. Buddhist traditions may be divided into three forms: the Theravāda (meaning the teaching of the elders), found in Southeast Asia; the Mahāyāna (meaning the great vehicle), found in Nepal, China, Korea and Japan; and the Tantrayāna (the esoteric vehicle), found in Tibet, Mongolia and parts of Siberia.

In fact, it is easier to discern the impact of Buddhism on the modern socio-political thought of these countries than that of India because of the integrating power of Hinduism and India's eclectic nature. Some of

the great figures in Indian history, such as Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Vinobha Bhave, Rabindranath Tagore and Krishnamurthi, exhibited the tremendous impact of the personality, philosophy and lifestyle of the Buddha on their thinking. One scholar observed that Indian leaders:

...have resented [the fact] that Buddhism declined in India; they have reaffirmed the Buddhist tradition of religious tolerance; they have criticised the existence of those very customs and institutions in their own tradition which were first criticised by the Buddha and the Buddhists. Caste system, priestly laws, feudal customs, untouchability, social disabilities of women, and the like, all these elements of traditional Brahmanical heritage have been attacked and reformed, at least in theory (Joshi 1973:8).

Thus it is said that the constitution of the Republic of India was inspired by the Buddha, and that the 'wheel of righteousness' on the national flag of India is a symbol of the Buddha's message of wisdom and compassion. Thus one who attempts to assess the place of Buddhism in the Indian ideological, cultural and religious heritage will find points of convergence and divergence. The world views of Islam and Christianity have been posited as alternatives by those who regard both Hinduism and Buddhism as being within the 'Old Asian' world perspective. Ninian Smart, who makes an analysis and an 'Inventory of Worldviews', refers to the following major orientations: the Marxist Bloc, the Islamic Crescent, Old Asia, the Latin World, black Africa and the Pacific (Smart 1983). To take one important doctrinal strand, the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, which all hark back to Abraham and the prophets, do not accept reincarnation. Rebirth, reincarnation, form a central component of the Hindu-Buddhist doctrinal axis.

This is, of course, not the place to do an exhaustive analysis of these different world views, but attention must be paid to the ways in which these perspectives influence all aspects of life, including socio-political reflections.

As an example of the relationship of world views and socio-political thought, let us take something connected to issues of caste, the concepts of rebirth and *kamma*. Both Buddhism and Hinduism accept the

existence of a moral order. In spite of the differences between the two systems, the concept of *dhamma* provides a common non-Western perspective. As Smart observes: 'Although Hinduism often involves belief in one divine being, it shares with Buddhism a sense that the law or *dharma* is not something which is commanded by God, but rather it is a part of the world' (Smart 1983). While Hinduism teaches that the caste system itself is controlled by this order, Buddhism does not see any moral or rational basis for caste. The Buddha has, of course, said that among the conditions that determine rebirth in lower castes can be previous actions of an evil nature (*kamma*) (Sn i:89). But the Buddha did not embrace fatalism by saying that mere birth (*jāti*) decided a person's position and role in life. People's conduct in this life is even more important than the result of their past actions.

Some people project a sense of fatalism into the *kamma* notion but this is due to a misunderstanding. The term *kamma* generally means that one's moral acts will bear fruit in this life as well as the next life. There are two strands in the *kamma* concept, both of which are important, and they may be referred to as the judicial model and the craftsmanship model.

Buddhism rejects both fatalism and the stagnant structures of caste based on divine sanctions. People should put aside distinctions related to birth or profession and place supreme emphasis on moral conduct: 'A man is noble or ignoble through conduct, but not through birth' (Sn:136, 142). In emphasising the importance of moral conduct, rejecting fatalism and theories of determinism, and focussing on free will, appealing to reason (see Soma 1959) and basically pointing towards the potentiality for good and bad within everyone, the Buddha upheld a notion of equality within the ethical and spiritual fold.

The Buddhist concept of the cosmic order and its conception of human potentiality, its ethics and its spiritual quest form the basic facets of its world view. This conception is again stabilised by its methodological perspectives, which emphasise rational examination of any views based on superstition and habit, confrontation with empirical situations and an experiential and humanistic approach to

problems. This perspective has generated interesting views about social concerns, and some of these threads will be put together in the following section.

Equality

The core of the Buddha's teaching was an ethical and spiritual message. His main concern was the sense of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), which lies at the base of the perilous human condition of unrest, anguish and ignorance. Reflections on society and polity emerged as a supplement to this concern. But this does not in any way mean that the Buddha was not concerned about the transformation of society; it only means that his approach to social concerns had a logic of its own, as does the analysis of concepts such as freedom, equality and justice.

The Buddha taught that social change could not be achieved merely by restructuring social organisations, as a basic transformation of the individual was necessary. Basically, the Buddha saw the strongest links between ethics and society and ethics and politics, and this whole dimension is summed up in the Buddhist conception of justice, which may be rendered by the term 'righteousness', a notion which characterises Buddhist thinking on equality. There was also a sense of pragmatism and practicality in the Buddha, who accepted the institution of kingship as it existed in his society but tried to enhance his seat of power and authority by guiding it on the principles of sound, fair and righteous rule. Above the social and political order was the Buddhist concept of *dhmma*, the cosmic order in the universe, and the king had not merely to respect this order but also, as the 'wheel-turning monarch', to see that this order was reflected in his regime. This is the special sense in which the Buddhist concept of justice (righteousness) reverberates within the socio-political scheme and relates in an interesting manner to the Buddhist concept of equality.

As the notion of equality in relation to caste and the position of women has often been discussed in the sermons in religious contexts, like the entry into the order and the potential for liberation, there has been a tendency to neglect its socio-political contexts. In the contexts

where the Buddha advises kings and ministers we get some interesting interventions.

A king's economic policy should be guided by a sense of 'equity' and this, as Wijesekera (1952) points out, can be inferred from 'the parallel qualifications of the righteous king's rule by *dhammena* and *śamena* with equally significant emphasis... The latter word, going back to a base "sama", meaning equality, is in its juristic aspect used to indicate impartiality and fairness' (Wijesekera 1952; D iii:59). It is said that when levying taxes the king should, bearing in mind the needs of the state, consider the plight of those who are subject to the taxes. There are even instances where a righteous king, in order to redress the poverty of some, had fresh taxes laid on the wealthy and the wealth distributed among the needy. *Dāna*, or giving to those who need, is a function of the righteous king. The Buddha discouraged greed and acquisition, encouraged moderate savings for the future, condemned both hoarding and waste, and recommended charity and liberality. The impelling motive of benevolence was stronger than any concept of distributive justice as such. In the political contexts we know that the Buddha asked the representatives of the Vajjian republic to respect their constitution and hold regular meetings in amity and concord. In general the *cakkavatti*, or the universal monarch, should govern justly and impartially (*dhammena śamena*). It has been said that the three components of righteousness are impartiality, just requital and truthfulness. The Buddhist concept of equality works within this framework (Tachibana 1943).

The main strands in the Buddhist equality concept are:

- An emphasis on the character, and the rejection of artificial and arbitrary distinctions among human beings, such as caste distinctions;
- A belief in the common human potentialities of spirituality and moral transformation, rationality, ability to feel for others' suffering, free will, and secular skills;
- A view that all beings (including animals) share the common human predicament, which may be broadly called *dukkha* unsatisfactoriness. Birth, sickness and death are the great levellers;

- A belief that great cosmic order rules all beings, concepts of rebirth and *kamma*:
 - (a) The Buddhist concept of rewards and punishment or just requital at the cosmic level (the judicial model);
 - (b) The strength of dispositional activity (the craftsmanship notion);
 - (c) Implementation of the just and righteous rule by the 'wheel-turning monarch'.
- The concept of human dignity and equal respect for all (*samānattatā*), exemplified by Buddha's attitude to Ambapālī (a moral outcast), Aṅgulimāla (a criminal);
- A belief in the provision of basic needs and the conditions for self-development;
- An expression of boundless compassion and benevolence (equality notions fed by a humanistic rather than legalistic conscience).

Some of these strands of the equality concept have been combined for a clearer and more comprehensive vision of equality in the Buddhist context. The major variable in the equality discussion in Buddhism is the notion of reciprocity, where certain desirable goals are to be attained through the notion of duties and obligations rather than rights. Instead of raising questions of equality in relation to man and woman, we find that they complement each other. In fact, over the years, other communal and organic relationships going beyond the family have emerged, especially in countries like Sri Lanka, where there are temple-centred village communities. A similar ethic of reciprocity is manifest in the traditional Chinese moral life and the Confucian discourses about the rules of proper conduct. This is an extremely important variable in non-Western presentations of equality.

The *Sigālovāda sutta* discusses the distribution of duties in six types of relationship: parents and children, pupil and teacher, husband and wife, householder and friend, employer and employee, and householder to a *samana*.

The concept of reciprocity is a certain socio-cultural type well exhibited in traditional Chinese moral life and Confucian discourse about 'rules of proper conduct'. To cite the moral virtues listed in the *Li Chi*:

Kindness on the part of the father, and the filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother, and obedience on the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband, and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of elders, and deference on that of juniors; with benevolence (*jen*) on the part of the ruler, and loyalty on that of the minister. These ten are the things which men consider to be right (see Cua 1983).

The notion of 'rights' does not find a comfortable home in Confucian ethics. It is necessary that we look at the human rights tradition in the West from the bases of our religious, ethical and cultural perspectives. Even the five Buddhist precepts, which embody the content of some of the human rights, are not presented in the form of rights, commandments, injunctions, and so on. They are presented in the form of a promise (or even duty) to ensure basic conditions of harmonious social life and the development of individual character. In the same manner the duties of the universal monarch to the people and the obligations of the subjects are discussed in the *suttas* (D i:89).

Normative and factual aspects of the equality concept

It has often been asked whether the concept of equality is grounded in facts or values. While it often takes the form of a maxim to guide action and an ideal to be approximated, there is often an appeal to facts, and this is especially so in debates about human nature. The idea is that behind all differences of talent, merit and social advantage, there is some characteristically human nature in terms of which all people can be considered equal.

Common humanity is central to the Buddhist analysis of equality, and though the assertion that people are alike in possessing certain truly human traits sounds like a tautology, it is of great importance to equality perspectives fed by strong humanistic overtones, as in Buddhism. It really combines a factual claim regarding traits of human

nature and the edifying call of a normative nature to develop these potentialities. Bernard Williams in his essay on 'The idea of equality' refers to the 'capacity to feel pain' and the 'capacity to feel affection for others' as important ingredients in the understanding of a common humanity. 'The assertion that men are alike in the possession of these characteristics is, while indisputable and (it may be) even necessarily true, not trivial. For it is certain that there are political and social arrangements that systematically neglect these characteristics in the case of some groups of men' (Williams 1972:155). Thus, if political and social arrangements neglect moral claims that arise from these characteristics, they are not satisfactory. In a very deep sense, the need to be respected as a human person and the ability to respond to others provides the most basic moral and psychological foundations for Buddhist reflections on equality.

Though there may be individual differences, there is a basic similarity in people's material, psychological and spiritual needs; it is both a fact to be respected and a norm to be recommended. If we take the Buddha's rejection of caste distinctions, on the one hand it is recommended as a norm that people should put aside distinctions related to birth, and place greater emphasis on conduct; it has also a factual component that, in the just dispensation of rewards and punishments in the cosmic moral order, conduct rather than birth is respected. It is of course a fact of a special kind, different from routine empirical facts. Like the ability to feel for those who are suffering, rationality, the presence of free will, and the potentiality for spiritual and moral transformation all have a factual core that is blended with normative considerations. They are perhaps idealised capacities. Men and women are considered as equal in having these potentialities, and in the case of compassion, a mother's feelings towards a child are taken as the paradigmatic expression of human compassion.

Egalitarianism, of course, does not always assert equality but rather denies the justice of some inequality in treatment based on irrelevant traits. In this context, the dimensions of equality in relation to race, caste, sex, and so on are important.

The Buddhist concept of equality has a strong link with the notion of righteousness (*dhamma*), which may be rendered for the Western student as justice, but yet in a narrow sense it is a Buddhist concept of justice or, in a broader sense, a notion of justice embedded in the Hindu-Buddhist world view.

The interlocking relations between justice and equality have been a subject of great interest in studies of equality in the West. In early Greek thought, for instance, the word *dike* (which came to mean a person's due share) contained the concept of equality, thus showing an interesting link between justice and equality. In the Buddhist context we have shown the strong link between righteousness and equality in relation to the way a sovereign should govern; *dhammena* and *samena* are used to describe the qualifications of an ideal ruler.

Within the Buddhist world view the notion of righteousness manifests itself at a number of levels. First, the moral and cosmic order, which evaluates people in terms of their normal moral conduct rather than their birth, wealth or position, and administers the just dispensation of rewards and punishments, is a great leveller. Second, the wheel-turning monarch is expected to rule by the principles of righteousness and thus practise the ideals of impartiality and fairness and in general encourage the people to practise these ideas themselves, along with other virtues like veracity and benevolence. Third, the individual is expected to follow the principle of righteousness in daily life, help in the stabilisation of a righteous regime and also develop human relationships and group relations on the same principle. In short, the Buddhist concept of justice as righteousness has a strong moral basis instead of mere legal or political overtones. Buddhist equality notions are nurtured within this world view.

The Buddhist perspective on equality is basically orientated towards the person as a free and rational moral agent. Treating persons as equals in this respect indicates that we value common human potentialities. The moral imperative to treat others in the same way as one would wish oneself to be treated assumes that we are in certain ways equal. This perspective is rooted in our deep capacity for benevolence and compassion.

Some dimensions of equality in Buddhism

The preceding examination of the concept of equality was not a historical study regarding the evolution of the equality concept in the Indian tradition; neither was it a descriptive and sociological study. Our primary task was analytical, to lay bare the main strands in the Buddhist equality concept in the context of specific variables and the world view that influences reflections on equality in the Buddhist tradition, and, along with this, to explore the possibility of finding a non-Western perspective on human rights. While historical and sociological studies can enrich our deliberations, the kind of ground clearing attempted here should have its own legitimate place in a multi-disciplinary forum.

We shall next examine some of the arguments the Buddha used in criticising the institution of caste, in the context of the available textual material in the sermons of the Buddha.

The Buddha attempted to show in significant contexts that there was no absolute sanction about caste gradations and that there was no need to assume that they have any sacred or divine sanction. For instance, the Buddha once told King Kosala that, in the event of a war, he would be forced to enlist in his army not only men of the warrior caste but also others, provided they were well trained, in spite of the fact that they may be drawn from the *kṣatriya*, *vaṛsya* or *sūdra* family. Here the Buddha was pointing towards the relative nature of these distinctions in a very clear empirical situation.

A similar argument is found in the *Madhura sutta*, where it is said that wealthy people, irrespective of caste, will find members of other castes willing to wait upon them and serve them (D Tr:105). It is interesting to find the Buddha using this kind of argument. He is not saying that wealth should be the norm that divides people, but merely that in actual situations, birth and colour (*vanna*) recede to the background in the face of wealth.

The example that wealth influences social relations is strengthened by three other arguments: a wicked person (whatever his or her *vanna*),

in accordance with the law of *kamma*, will be born in a bad place and a good person in a state of bliss; criminals, regardless of *vanna*, will be equally subject to punishment; and whatever a man's *vanna*, if he joins the order, he will receive equal respect and honour from people. The first argument is used in terms of the cosmic moral order, to which we have referred earlier; the second argument regarding criminals is interesting as it refers to the legal context. The final argument is also interesting because it refers to the religious context. It is necessary to keep in mind these diverse arguments, as some scholars have overemphasised the religious context regarding admission to the order. This is an important context, but the Buddha had a more comprehensive and complex case against caste.

In the same way that the Buddha was critical of the alleged absoluteness of caste distinctions, he was critical of the fatalism that was often associated with it. The Buddha admitted that, among the factors that cause a person's birth in a lower caste, previous bad *kamma* may be one. The Buddha, however, did not embrace fatalism by saying that mere birth decided a person's place and position in life. The Buddha avoids theories of determinism with a fatalistic flavour and theories of indeterminism that see the emergence of events as accidents. The fatalistic view considers our experiences to be the result of previous actions and totally determined by them (*pubbekatahetu*), or, alternatively determined by some divine plan (*issaranimmanahetu*). According to strict determinism, the present and the future are dependent on the past and are therefore unalterable—every event is predetermined according to a divine plan. Free will in the Buddhist context means the ability of a person to control the dynamic forces of the past and present and make the future different from what it would otherwise have been.

Apart from emphasising the concept of free will, the Buddha also encourages his followers to look at history, at the sense of dynamism involved in the evolution of society. This evolutionary concept of society, though taking the form of a myth in the *Aggañña sutta* (D *sutta* 27) and also developed in the *Cakkavattiśihanāda sutta* (D *sutta* 26) in the form of a legend, presents a model of social change that contrasts with the more static picture of the universe that prevailed at the time.

Not only does the Buddha say that changes can be seen in a dynamic evolutionary setting, but also that Buddhism accepts change and flux as a part of the nature of things. It is also said that laws are not haphazard. There are laws pertaining to the natural world as well as the psychological and social, and these may be described as non-deterministic social correlations. Ideas, ideologies and economic factors influence the paths of social change. In the process of change, the moral factor plays a crucial role, and good and bad are qualities not determined by caste distinctions. 'Now seeing, Vāseṭṭha, that both bad and good qualities, blamed and praised respectively by the wise, are thus distributed among each of the four classes, the wise do not admit those claims which the brahmins put forward' (D iii:83). Scholars feel that, though built up in the form of a fanciful myth, the *Aggañña Sutta* has some interesting insights into social evolution and is much nearer the truth than the Brahmin legend it was intended to replace.

Here again, we see that though matters like equality in relation to admission to the order and the potential for religious development made the stand on caste important in the religious context, the Buddha's vindication of the anti-caste perspective emerged from a broader world view.

Another interesting aspect of Buddha's discussions on caste is that in certain contexts the Buddha directly appealed to human rationality. The Buddha says in the *Vāseṭṭha sutta* that, though there are species among plants and animals, among people there are no such distinctions. Even if there are minor differences regarding the colour of the hair or skin or the shape of the head, there are no characteristics indicating differences of species (*lingaṃ Jātimayaṃ*) among human beings. There is a direct appeal to people to accept facts and their implications.

This argument has received a good deal of discussion in relation to the very pointed resemblance we find between race prejudice and caste prejudice:

The phenomenon of caste in India, if only due to its uniqueness, is probably to be traced to a multiplicity of factors, some of which are peculiar to the Indian context, but much of caste prejudice probably

had its origin in the racial prejudices of the race-conscious fair-skinned Aryans trying to suppress and administer the dark-skinned aborigines. In any case, the analogy between race prejudice and discrimination and the prejudice and discrimination within the hierarchy of castes is so close that the case against the former is applicable to the latter—and vice versa (Malalasekera and Jayatilleke 1958:20; see also Jayatilleke 1967).

Racial and caste-orientated thinking is not only irrational, it has grave practical consequences like the possible denial of political and economic equality, equality before the law, and religious freedom. The study of these practical contexts and the socio-economic role of the caste system over the years in India (or even in Sri Lanka) goes beyond the analytically-orientated theoretical study envisaged in this chapter.

Another facet of the critique of caste in Buddhism is to be found in the references to the psychological foundations of prejudice and the roots of caste and racial conceit. While *suttas* like the *Assalayana Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* break through the deluded collective arrogance of caste groups, and while the sermon uses both commonsensical reflections and rational arguments for this purpose, the psychological facets of this issue are important. Though the Buddhist contribution to the psychological roots of the issue is significant, it has been a neglected subject in textual-orientated studies of caste in Buddhism. Feelings of identity (as opposed to uncritical and compulsive mechanisms of identification) have a temporary role from a Buddhist perspective; they can give a sense of direction and coherence, so long as we are aware of the limited goals of seeking a national identity in socio-political contexts. But we should not let this expand into an inflated and uncritical conceit. Like individuals, nations can develop a healthy sense of patriotism or love for the country, but they can also develop damaging narcissistic self-images of a fanatical type, and this factor is all the more important in pluralistic contexts, where there are different religious, ethnic, linguistic and caste identities (see De Silva 1985a). While majority groups can develop uncritical identities, minority groups can be nourished by feelings of inferiority conceits or even equality conceits.

According to the Buddha, self-conceit takes three forms: I am superior to others (*seyyo 'ham asmi-māna*), I am equal to the others

(*sadiso 'ham asmi-māna*), I am inferior to others (*hino 'ham asmi-māna*). *Māna* can range from a crude feeling of pride to a subtle feeling of distinctiveness. Pride, vanity and conceit can emerge in interpersonal as well as inter-group situations. They can centre around relation to physical appearance, birth, intelligence, or wealth, as well as caste or race (*jātimada*).

Women, family and the religious quest

Buddhist discussions about the role of women in relation to the notion of equality can often be misplaced, as the contexts in which we raise the subject are somewhat different to those of equality notions in relation to caste or race. The Buddha was critical about caste without any equivocation or ambiguity, and exposed the fact that the pre-Buddhistic rationale for it was untenable. Regarding the position of women in Buddhism, there are two contexts that have to be distinguished. While being critical of any primitive attitudes towards women, such as the performance of *suttee* (self-immolation at the husband's funeral pyre), the Buddha was attempting to find the place of women amidst the diversity of human relationships, lifestyles and the contrasting life perspectives of the householder and the recluse. In spite of the great deal of literature available on the subject, the failure to acknowledge the historical background of these simple points gives rise to misunderstanding. In the Confucian ethos (which has great relevance for Buddhist notions of the family), the ideas of propriety, elegance, sensitivity in human relationships, and especially the dimensions of the feminine as well as masculine take a central place. If we take the *Sigālovāda Sutta* as paradigmatic of the Buddhist concept of reciprocity in human relations, the notion of people being supplementary or complementary to one another acquires greater centrality than the concept of equality. The concept of equality did emerge in some form, when the question of the admission of women to the order was raised. As far as the potential and the need for liberation from suffering was concerned there was no dispute. The Buddha preached to both men and women and recognised the spiritual potential of women. The second point on which there has been discussion within the Buddhist tradition, especially within the *Mahāyāna* tradition, is the possibility of women

attaining Buddhahood, apart from the realisation of sainthood or perfection (*arahant*). A third point that has received some discussion is the relative superiority of the formal place of the monk in contrast to that of the nun.

There is a significant difference of perspective in the goals of the householder who aims for righteous and harmonious living (*dhammacariyā*, *samacariyā*) and the recluse seeking a more immediate form of liberation and inner peace. The householder attempts to be a well-adjusted and balanced person, who, while seeking pleasure, exercises a degree of restraint, limits desire and condemns excessive and illegitimate pleasures. While the life of the recluse (*brahmacariyā*) emphasises the ideal of celibacy, the life of the householder (*gahapati*) emphasises the ideal of chastity. Chastity is an important virtue, and the sanctity of family life and the ideals of conjugal love are upheld in Buddhism. Though polygamy was a prevailing pattern at the time, monogamy fits with the Buddhist ideal. The woman's place within this family, contributing to the spiritual aspects, is well recognised in the sermons of the Buddha and the literary works that emerged around the doctrine. She brings stability, care, patience and compassion into the home, but is yet capable of dynamism, activity and even physical exertion. With the passage of time Buddhist women have accepted broadening social and political roles, and this need not cause any tension.

Confusion about the distinction between the lifestyle of the householder and the recluse has resulted in misunderstanding of the place of women in Buddhism, and especially the place of women in relation to men's sexual life, the blessings of a happy married life and the nature of conjugal love and domestic felicity. To cite one example, the *Encyclopaedia of religion and ethics* article discussing women and emancipation in Buddhism comments: 'Nor did Buddhism, in spite of its universalism, place a woman on a higher level with man, its highest morality demands entire abstinence from sexual life' (Hastings 1937:276). The author of this article fails to realise that, even when women enter the higher life, celibacy is a strict ideal they have to follow. I have discussed Buddhist perspectives on sexuality in detail elsewhere (De Silva 1973:78).

There are many contexts where the Buddha emphasises the power of women to attract and excite men, their craft and cunning and their seductive strains, which can even match the sensualist in Sören Kierkegaard's *Banquet* (see De Silva 1976b:76). In fact, a Buddhist text comments, 'Inscrutable as the way of a fish in water is the nature of women, those thieves of many devices, with whom truth is hard to find' (Cūlavagga).

Nevertheless, the virtues in which women excel and the spiritual heights they attain, as well as the magic power they have in converting a house into a home, are central to a Buddhist perspective on women. It is because the Buddha saw the terrible sense of dissonance and tedium in the life of the pure sensualist (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) that he recommended the more balanced family life to both men and women who wish to commit themselves to the life of a householder.

When Mahaprajapati Gotami first asked to be granted religious rights, the Buddha was hesitant. Further requests were made, the last with the backing of Ānanda. Then the Buddha consented. This episode has been the subject of much discussion. When Ānanda asked the Buddha whether women were not capable of a contemplative life and treading the path of arahantship, the Buddha replied that they were certainly capable of gaining arahantship. A plausible answer to this situation has been given:

This event described in the Pāli Canon as well as Chinese Agamas reveals that Gautama hesitated to permit admission of women in the Order, not because women could not attain enlightenment, but because he had to deliberate on problems which might arise between the Order of monks and that of nuns, and between the Buddhist Order and the lay society (Yuichi 1982:60).

The Buddha was both a great sage and a great administrator and he acted with much caution.

The hesitation or deliberation was quite natural on his part as the leader of a great number of disciples. We should not interpret this event as showing discrimination against women by Gautama because he never as much as hinted that a woman had not the same chance as a man to

become an arahant, or that she was in any way unfit by her nature to attain nirvana (Yuichi 1982:60).

The claim that a woman cannot attain Buddhahood is recorded in the *sutta* literature, and only the Mahāyānists have tried to give a modified interpretation. In the *Bahudhātukasutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya*, five types of impossibility are cited for a woman: to become a Buddha, Universal Monarch, Mara, Indra or Brahma, while they are within the powers of a man (M *sutta* 115). A similar reference is found in the *Anguttara-nikāya* (A i:5). Some of the Mahāyānists, however, infer that a female can be an aspirant to Buddhahood. What the Theravāda sources indicate is that, in the life in which a person attains Buddhahood, that person has to be a man.

Regarding the moral and spiritual excellence of women there is a well-documented tradition of references. A considerable section of the poetic utterances of women who attained various grades of spiritual state are found in the *Therīgāthā*. Records of the attainment of arahantship as well as insights into nirvana are found here. Other references are the *Bhikkuni saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* and the stories of the Apadāna. Some of the nuns, Shukla, Kundala-Keshi, Bhadra-Kapilani and Dharmadatta, were well-known speakers who gave sermons to large groups. There are many celebrated sections of the *sutta* dealing with women's wisdom and moral excellences, as well as the predicament of women seeking solace from the Buddha—Queen Mallika, Khema of great wisdom, Kisāgotami, Patācāra, Ambapali, and so on (see Horner 1975; 1978; Hecker 1982).

In general, if we take the historical context into account, the profile of women in the *suttas* is an inspiring and balanced image.

The political and economic contexts of the equality concept

Questions pertaining to equality in the political contexts of today are very different from the simpler issues of the time of the Buddha. Kingship was the established institution of the time, and it was the king who directed the political, economic and administrative structure of the country. Instead of attempting to reject the institution, the Buddha

tried to humanise and elevate its moral stature. The notion that the king should govern with the approval and the consent of the people was the axiom to be followed, and a significant phrase used to describe the king was *mahāsammata*: the king is so entitled as he has been selected by the people. He was also expected to govern according to the principles of the *dhmma* and to ensure that the moral and cosmic order of the universe was reflected in his regime, and thus the universal monarch was called the 'wheel-turning monarch'. The king has to maintain stability and peace, and ensure the happiness and prosperity of the people. The ideal king in Buddhism is referred to as *dhmmika dhammāraja* (righteous lord of righteousness). He rules the people with justice and equity.

There were ten royal virtues that guided the king: generosity; moral conduct; self-sacrifice; honesty and integrity; gentleness and politeness; austerity and simplicity; freedom from hatred and ill will; practice of non-violence; patience; and non-opposition to public welfare.

The people's voice should be effective when the king does not follow these principles, and heredity is not the sole criterion of the genuine successor to kingship. In the simple political framework during the time of the Buddha, concepts of political equality did not have the strong thrust they have today.

Compared with the more simple perspective on politics, Buddhist thoughts on economic activities have a more perennial appeal. We are living in a world that has escalated a crisis of a kind and that is evolving its own methodology to intervene in the dilemma it has created.

The Buddha, of course, believes that it is easier to follow a diagnostic path at the outset than to intervene in a situation one cannot control. But how can a Buddhist blueprint for a confused world be ever implemented? For whatever it is worth, the message has been spelled out from time to time (see Karunatilleke 1976; Schumacher 1973; de Silva 1982). The socio-economic context in which the Buddha preached was far simpler than ours. He certainly considered poverty and starvation as a kind of crime, and a celebrated Jātaka tells how he refused to

preach to a hungry man (till the man was fed and looked after by the Jātaka's disciples). But during the days of the Buddha the craving for material goods was not so great, people were content with what they had, their wants were fewer and the wealth and income disparities were not as great as they are today. There was less tension, less competition, the population was small and there were no problems with the environment. The Buddha gave simple rules to guide economic activities, which are discussed in a number of *suttas*. For instance, in the *Vyaggahapajja Sutta* the Buddha outlines three factors which contribute to economic stability and general well-being: production of wealth through skilled and earnest endeavour, its protection, and living within one's means. A guide for simple and contented living could emerge from the innumerable sermons on the subject. The Buddha's principles of economics were not neutral regarding the ends for which people live—an ethical dimension pervaded all aspects of life. This is why after a gap of 2,500 years Schumacher (1993) remarked: 'The important question is not our competence regards means but our realism and wisdom regards ends'.

In the economic sphere, the central problem for the Buddha was the satisfaction of people's basic needs, which is a necessary prerequisite for intellectual, moral and spiritual development. By advocating the ethic of self-restraint he showed the way for both the householder and the recluse to lead a simple life. He constructed a balanced lifestyle for them that recommended a modest degree of saving but condemned wastage, hoarding and miserliness.

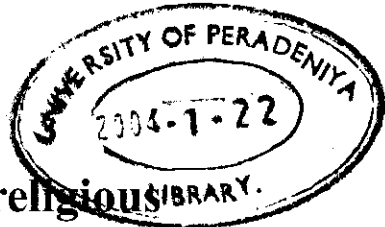
Though there was no integrated concept of distributive justice as such, the idea that the needy should be helped and that wealth should be given to the have-nots was accepted even by the kings. A retiring monarch advises his son in this manner: 'Dear son, and whom so ever in thy kingdom are the "have-nots", to them let wealth be given' (D iii:61). A king's economic policy was to be guided by principles of equity. A strong sense of benevolence made the people practise charity; the distribution of goods and wealth (*dāna*) is recommended by the Buddha in place of the sacrifice (*yajña*) recommended in the Brahmanic doctrines.

Concluding thoughts

It has been my aim here to make a modest contribution to the discussion of the notion of equality in Asian religious and cultural traditions, and with this end in view, we have clarified some theoretical strands in the Buddhist perspectives on equality. Studies of this sort could contribute to a deeper, closer and authentic understanding of Asian traditions and encourage students of human rights to undertake in-depth studies of the Eastern and Asian world views that influence ethico-religious and socio-political reflections. The interest in non-Western perspectives on human rights should be encouraged.

It may be premature and even pretentious to suggest any practical line of action. We live in a complex world. For example, the question of economic inequality that we considered as our concluding item for discussion is today a gigantic puzzle-it is a vicious cycle of food shortages, population growth, inflation, unemployment, overconsumption, social pollution and ideological conflict. However, Unesco is recommending practical and viable programs with a strong ethical mission, furthering respect for justice, the rule of law, and the dignity of people without distinctions of race, caste, sex and religion. They function at two levels: they intervene in conflict situations and try to disentangle dilemmas, but they also recommend long-range programs with a diagnostic focus to change people's attitudes. If there is a Buddhist contribution to human rights at the practical level, it should be the furtherance of the latter function (see De Silva 1967).

The cross-cultural study of world views breaks through the temperamental addiction to closed systems. It encourages people to probe diverse religious and cultural perspectives and helps them to isolate and preserve all that is of lasting value (see Rawls 1972).



Human rights and religious anthropologies in a changing world

A central concern of this chapter is whether the different concepts of the good life provided by the world's greatest faiths leave room for neutral norms and values independent of religious traditions. Given the fact of pluralism and the necessity of coexistence, traditions will have to pass the test of some sort of universal moral code. Do human rights provide such a neutral standard and what are the resources in the different religious traditions to appropriate the norms of the human rights discourse? The question is presented in terms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and I am specifically concerned with the resources in the Buddhist tradition.

When we talk of resources in the Buddhist tradition we are first concerned with the primary discourses in the form of available texts, secondary sources and current discussions. But there is also a historical as well as socio-economic and socio-political adjustment that religions make as a response to human rights discourse. Thus even the intellectual responses of the scholars in different religious traditions come within the purview of social activists. Theravāda Buddhist scholars in countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka do show a concern with the need to modernise the Buddhist world view and interpret religious tradition in terms relevant to socio-economic and political challenges. Even the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has been updated, supplemented, expanded and even reinterpreted. Religious discourse should also be able to adopt to social change.

This chapter examines not merely the availability of norms, precepts and ethical values in Buddhist texts, but also the need to interpret them with imagination and flexibility, and to apply them to the challenging forms of human rights discourse today. All religions today are concerned with finding a neutral language to talk about religion and human rights.

Religious dialogues on human rights

I shall now briefly raise several issues that challenge the use of the human rights charter as a neutrally-formulated common ground for religions, and then take these issues separately for discussion.

First is the diversity of the items listed as human rights in the UN declaration. A coverage of all these items becomes too unwieldy a project for talking across religions. It may be possible to search for the more basic values of the human rights declaration. I am thinking of core values like the sanctity of life, which is common to the religions.

The next issue emerges from certain intrinsic qualities of the nature of morality. There is a distinction between the narrow morality of constraint, which considers ethics in terms of rules and rights, and the broader morality which focusses on the development of virtues and character. There are other distinctions regarding divergent moral perspectives, like the ethics of care and the ethics of rights, the ethics of virtues and vices as different from the ethics of will and decision making and so on. These distinctions generally contrast the legalistic and the more humanistic springs of our moral life. To integrate a human rights discourse to religions this gap has to be closed in some way.

The third issue is the multiplicity of religious traditions, their logic, metaphysics and cultural embodiment. In spite of the claim that there is a certain commonality in the ethical codes of the various religious traditions, their differences may prevent a common approach to human rights. How can we blend the need to preserve the distinctiveness of each religious tradition and yet discover commonalities through human rights discourse?

The fourth issue is contextuality: the new challenges for human rights perceptions and inter-religious perspectives. This chapter is mainly devoted to this last matter.

The variety and diversity of human rights

At a conceptual level, the Buddhist tradition is a rich resource when dealing with issues of equality, rights and freedom with reference to

race, sex, language, religion, political opinion, ethnic and social origin status. It is a richness which may be shared to a great extent with other religious traditions.

I have discussed in detail the main strands of the Buddhist equality concept in the previous chapter, and need only sum up its main features here:

- An emphasis on character, and the rejection of artificial and arbitrary distinctions among human beings, such as caste distinctions.
- A belief in the common human potentialities of spirituality and moral transformation, rationality, ability to feel for others' suffering, free will and secular skills.
- A view that all beings (including animals) are subject to the common predicament, which is described as a state of unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*). This is a great leveller.
- The belief in the great cosmic order that rules all beings in terms of *kamma* and rebirth. The Buddhist notion of equality is coloured by this moral order, *dhamma*, as righteous order. The king is referred to as a 'wheel turning monarch' who attempts to see that this *dhamma* is manifest in the rule of his kingdom. This is what gives the Buddhist perspective on equality a moral footing.
- The concept of human dignity and equal respect for all (*samanatata*) exemplified by Buddha's attitude to Ambapālī (a moral outcast), Aṅgulimāla (a criminal) and Rukkhās (a social outcast).
- Basic needs and the conditions for self-development, common to all.
- The Buddhist notion of benevolence and compassion.

As noted in the previous chapter, it has been observed that the notion of human rights is too much a product of the West and needs more flexible integration into religious traditions that are rooted in the Orient. The notion of *kamma* too is more than a mere point of doctrine, but it is

a cultural framework through which Buddhists and Hindus order their personal, social and cultural lives.

It appears that the variety of human rights in the Declaration may not be a great obstacle to the development of a common human rights discourse. Clarified and presented in a variety of ways, they embody basic norms and values that have a universal appeal:

- equality;
- rights embodying life, liberty, security and property;
- freedom of thought, expression, conscience and the political rights of selecting and participating in a government;
- rights to belong to a nation and enjoy the fruits of marriage, rights to work and employment, education and health;
- legal protection and equality before the law.

I have placed them broadly in five groups that are universally acceptable. Religions have the textual and conceptual resources to integrate them into their perspectives.

Though there is an appeal to them as basic values and norms, the human rights discourse in a narrow legalistic framework may not penetrate the distinctive ethos of the different traditions. Thus, such a plurality of inspiration and the ethos of the different traditions need not always be a liability state for achieving a common platform; it may be an asset that could enrich a more authentic framework for mutual coexistence. Due to the constraints on a lengthy discussion of the five groups of values and norms above, I have taken equality as an example for discussion. Life, liberty, security and property all have a central place in the ethical codes of all the major religions (de Silva 1985a: 140–142).

Different styles of appropriating the meaning of the human rights discourse can become a liability state if each tradition becomes frozen in its distinctive outlook, as if there are no other roads to the same goal.

The comparative study of religion helps students understand the logic of discourse in traditions other than their own.

One has to take religious differences seriously, and this is clear in the context of Buddhism, when as an individual one seeks liberation from the cycle of existence. But such liberation-oriented discourse for the individual is always supplemented with more socially accepted modes of interaction with other individuals.

At the level of social ethics there is a legitimate space for Buddhists to work with others for the realisation of common goals, whether it be a project on social service, social justice or poverty alleviation. Human rights often provide a negative space of constraint, but it is necessary to work for more positive goals. Even at the level of liberation-oriented discourse, the Buddha said that there can be degrees of spiritual growth outside Buddhism:

The early Buddhist conception of the nature and destiny of man in the universe is, therefore, not in basic conflict with the beliefs and values of the founders of the great religions so long as they assert some sort of survival, moral values, freedom and responsibility and the non-inevitability of salvation (Jayatilleke 1970).

Narrow morality and broader morality

A narrow morality focusses on the rules and principles that make social coexistence possible, having duties, obligations and rights as its central categories, whereas a broad morality is an ethic of virtue and character. It is said that the doctrine of human rights seems possible only within narrow morality, which is concerned with the existence of *a common core between different traditions*.

While this distinction is well rooted in the history of the development of ethical systems, the language of rules and rights may not always be the best to adopt, even in situations of resolving human rights conflicts. We perhaps need new distinctions that will help us to penetrate narrow morality from the bases of broad morality. The work of Carrol Gilligan points towards an interesting approach to situations dominated by the *ethic of rules and rights* (Gilligan 1982). A person called Heinz has to

decide whether or not he should steal a drug (which he cannot afford to buy) in order to save the life of his wife. Jake, a boy of 11 years, sees the problem in clear logical terms, as a conflict between the value of property and the value of life, and upholds the value and the priority of life over property. On the other hand, Amy, an 11 year old girl, gives another type of answer: 'Well, I do not think so, I think there might be other ways besides stealing it, like if he should borrow the money or make a loan or something, but he should not steal the drug—but his wife should not die either'. Both children recognise the need for agreement, but it is mediated in different ways: by Jake through the impersonal systems of logic and law, and by Amy personally through communication in relationships (Gilligan 1982). Gilligan points out that the construction of the moral problem in this context is one of care and responsibility rather than one of rights and rules (de Silva 1984c).

This example shows that there is a limitation in using the human rights discourse as the sole paradigm for dealing with human problems that have an ethical edge. We need a more flexible approach to deal with moral situations. The human rights discourse has an important function (as will be clarified in the last section of this chapter), but it has to be mediated by other perspectives on morality, depending on the context.

The social ethics of Buddhism leave room for both the ethic of care and the ethic of rights, but as was mentioned earlier, the Buddhist ethic of rights is tempered by duties and obligations based on reciprocity, and a concept of righteousness based on the moral order (*dhamma*) and the concept of moral causation (*kamma*). Buddhist ethics is a blend of humanistic altruism (resting on the philosophy of the four sublime states) and the notion of a righteous social, moral and political order (see de Silva 1991a). Though the ethical path of Buddhism may be described as leading towards a consequentialist ideal, Buddhism has a tempered and culturally-coloured deontological strand. But the base of Buddhist ethics is the doctrine of compassion (de Silva 1998b) and it brings into play a wide variety of virtues. To some extent, Buddhist ethics are ethics of virtues and vices (de Silva 1991a).

Being concerned with moral development, Buddhist ethics deal both with the nature of evil states that darken the mind, and the wholesome mental states that illuminate the mind. The discourse on the *Simile of the cloth* (M Tr i:discourse 7) mentions 16 states that may interfere with positive and wholesome morality: greed, covetousness, malevolence, anger, malice, hypocrisy, spite, envy, stinginess, deceit, treachery, obstinacy, impetuosity, arrogance, pride and conceit. The management, control and eradication of evil psychological states and the growth of wholesome states provide the deeper basis of moral development in Buddhism, and these ethics of virtue and character (broad morality) have both a personal and social dimension. The virtues recommended fall into three groups: (i) virtues of conscientiousness—veracity, truthfulness and righteousness; (ii) virtues of benevolence—loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity; (iii) virtues of self-restraint—self-control, abstinence, contentment, patience, celibacy, chastity, purity.

From the Buddhist perspective, the lasting base for the preservation of human rights and their natural flowering in human society will be the broader morality. But the broader and narrow moralities have to penetrate each other's realms. Does this strong strand of broad morality in Buddhist ethics impede development of a neutral language of human rights discourse across religions?

If we concentrate on praxis rather than the theoretical vocabulary of moral emotions, compassion, whether it is Buddhist, Christian, Hindu or Islamic, should certainly underpin human rights. Across religions, not merely as a liberation-oriented discourse but as a socially manifest pattern of interaction among peoples, compassion provides one of the lasting bases for the preservation of human rights, and the neutral vocabulary of human rights. Of course, the need for human rights emerges because the great faiths and their followers do not always adhere to the message of the teachers, and because genuine and well-mediated religious identities are not powerful enough to penetrate into other types of identities—political, ethnic, economic, linguistic—that are creating problems.

But the real world is always a mixture of the best and the worst. All this perhaps suggests that narrow morality has to rest on broad morality, and the fact that religious traditions are heavily immersed in morality need not prevent the development of a neutral language of human rights discourse. On the contrary, broad morality in the religions may provide a rich base for its preservation. The problems are not conceptual but issues of praxis and contextuality.

Multiplicity of religious traditions

The very fact that there is a multiplicity of religious traditions, and that their followers go to the temple, church, kovil and mosque, implies that they also meet each other at business, office, play, courts of law, police stations and the theatre. If issues of religious discrimination emerge, freedom of conscience as a human right has to mediate between conflicting religious identities. Identities are strongly affirmed and protected.

In situations of this sort, the human rights discourse itself is summoned to preserve the very survival of religions. It is also possible that a strong body of opinion across religious communities can stand against the very misuse of religion to justify prejudice, hatred and warfare.

Metaphysical differences between religious traditions imperil the development of a neutral vocabulary of human rights only if the religions as groups have developed harmful and even pathological identity profiles. Collective identities, if viable and wholesome, have an impact on individuals. Thus it is my contention that the issues pertaining to the metaphysical aspect of religious traditions and their attempts to develop a human rights discourse are encouraged by the development of the correct type of identity profile and obstructed by the wrong type of identity profile. As Bardwell Smith observes:

At the heart of identity always is what it means to be a person, a community, which is a religious more than it is a social or political or ethnic issue. In fact, it is significantly religious to the very degree that it not only takes seriously these other aspects of personhood (i.e. one's

communal, national and cultural roots) but does not bestow ultimate status upon them (Smith 1976:4).

As the identity of persons is both individual and corporate, Bardwell Smith adds that continuous self-criticism is necessary to develop the correct kind of identity profile.

The teachings of the Buddha present a sustained analysis and critique of the issue of personal identity, though its logical implications for collective identity concepts have not been greatly explored by Buddhist scholars. But the extensions are useful and give the Buddhist a tool for authentic self-criticism (de Silva 1988). The five-fold identification emerging from corporeality, feeling, perception, dispositions and consciousness manifests in a number of ways, generating as many as 20 types of wrong personality beliefs. Both personal identity and group identity may be seen as a grand illusion. Personal identity is not just a shapeless protoplasm with no sense of direction; within the debris of the illusion, we have to generate a lifestyle without falling into the traps of false identity. The dissolution of the ego does not necessarily mean a diminution of one's co-ordinating powers. As I have stated elsewhere (de Silva 1988), one has to navigate between utter chaos and the paths of identity illusions. We have to find a realm of critical and interim identities, dissolving them as we cross them and transcending them as we cut across their inner dialectic. 'The reality of personal and group identities all flounder on this narrow ridge, and to steer clear of the traps is the greatest challenge' (de Silva 1988:17).

This is the Buddhist conceptual framework for understanding the nature of religious identities, and it is from this vantage point that one can probe the possibility of a variety of religious anthropologies appropriating a neutral discourse of human rights.

Issues of contextuality

I am very much interested in the place of human rights in the context of environmental issues. This is of course a question that has not been probed deeply by experts on human rights. The interest has mainly emerged in the work of moral philosophers looking at the ethical issues of environmentalism.

It has been observed that among environmental philosophers, the 'rights language' is out of vogue. It may be that is not merely out of vogue but that the rights approach has a heavy focus on individual desires and preferences, and that the ecological notions of relatedness and compatibility sounds discordant in a discourse that is concerned with the adjudication of rights claims between humans. 'Maybe... we need a more relational or communitarian, albeit humanistic, moral theory which recognises responsibilities without requiring a reduction to right claims' (Aiken 1992:196-197).

The rights approach has also been found to be deficient in the development of a holistic concept of the environment. In 1982, when the United Nations Environmental Program was released, there was a shift from the language of rights to the language of responsibility. This is an important change of perspective.

But there is always a swing back to the discourse of rights, and thus in the Brundtland Report, the most important right concerned the environment: 'All human beings have the fundamental right to an environment adequate for their health and well-being' (Brundtland 1982:4). Critics feel that the Commission have inserted but not integrated the vocabulary of rights into their statement. While attempts have been made to invoke the discourse of human rights to include claims for a proper environment, the Rio conference witnessed the demand by the Third World that sustainable development has to blend with the alleviation of poverty and the absence of social injustice. They spoke of the violence of the green movement. Thus the voice of economic equality emerged.

What this short commentary on human rights and environmentalism indicates is that both the ethic of rights and the ethic of care are perennially rooted in the moral perspectives we have developed over the years, and they emerge in novel guises. Buddhist ethics are quite at ease with the ethics of the new environmentalism (de Silva 1998a). In both its environmental philosophy and its environmental ethics, Buddhism is not very much dependent on the discourse of human rights, though some of its important strands, like the concern for future

generations, may be described in terms of the vocabulary of rights. Buddhist ethics emphasise the reciprocal duties and obligations between husband and wife, parent and child or student and teacher; the principle of reciprocity based on the interdependence of all living beings offers the framework for the relations between humans and nature, and humans and non-human beings.

The principle of reciprocity and interdependence calls for an ethic of responsibility rather than one of rights. The Buddhist concept of dependent origination shows that a living entity cannot isolate itself from the vast causal network around it. The notion of environmental holism emphasises that a system is more than the sum of its parts.

While rights-based environmental norms may find some place in a Buddhist ethic, the global attitude within—the concern for the non-human world, the focus on the eco-system and the concern for future generations—does not take us to a rights-based morality in environmental concerns.

Perhaps, there are trends that could make environmentalism visionary, and then a rights approach to environmental protection may be a needed corrective. It has even been said that a realistic and feasible approach to ecological political reform requires a society that respects human rights (McClosky 1983). There is some political weight in using the human rights discourse, which has become a kind of familiar international language, to uphold the protection of the environment, as well as the enforcement of necessary rules. Human rights can contribute to environmental issues, providing a pragmatic and prudential approach to certain issues. As William Aiken points out, if a spiritually-green communitarian era arrives in the world, the human rights approach may not be needed for the protection of the environment, but till then it has to be one of the approaches for dealing with the environment.

Buddhist ethics adapt more naturally to a communitarian approach to environmentalism, but certainly leave room for a rights approach, when it is contextually tied to a much-needed praxis.

I have used the example of human rights in an ecological era to emphasise the point that when we look at human rights discourse from

the perspectives of major religions, one cannot decide the issue by merely looking at religious texts only, though they provide a veritable goldmine of insights. It is necessary to be aware that the very framework of human rights has been put to test by the changing conditions of the human situation. From the year 1948 (Declaration of the UN Charter of Human Rights) to the year 1987 (the Brundtland Report) the changes that have emerged are seen in the number of charters and commission reports that have been published. Any commentary on the place of a human rights discourse in the religious traditions has to take account of these changing perspectives.

Environmental ethics in a pluralist world will try to combine the different moral perspectives, which is even a wider task than using the language of human rights as a neutral discourse common to the different religious traditions. The human rights discourse may not exhaust the potential for common frontiers among religions.

Environmental ethics in Buddhism

The Buddhist frame of reference

The Buddha's basic message is contained in the doctrine of the four noble truths. The first truth states that all forms of existence are unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), the second asserts that the origin of suffering is craving, the third is the ideal of the extinction of suffering, and the fourth outlines the eight-fold path leading to the extinction of suffering. Though the Pali word *dukkha* is generally translated as 'suffering', it is difficult to find one simple word that incorporates all aspects of its meaning. Starting with concrete and specific instances of physical pain and bodily ailments, it incorporates mental sorrow, insecurity, conflict and anxiety, and finally unsatisfactoriness, disharmony and emptiness.

The condition of *dukkha* as unsatisfactoriness or disharmony is broader in meaning than a term like 'ecological crisis'. The ecological crisis is only one expression of the existential situation common to all beings. If we diagrammatically represent *dukkha* and the ecological crisis as two separate circles (D and E), there are a number of possibilities: (1) they exclude each other, (2) they are synonymous, (3) they intersect at different points, (4) each is the larger within which the smaller circle is contained. We could say that they intersect and a part of D is contained within E or that D is the larger circle within which is contained the whole of the smaller circle, E. From a Buddhist perspective, D is the broader existential context.

I have emphasised this point about the broader implications of the Buddhist doctrine of suffering because current thinking about the environment has shifted from a narrow way of looking at environmental issues to a deeper and more radical perspective. In the past, people considered the environment as something given and to be used. If coal was needed, people simply used it, and if industrial waste had to be removed, the rivers provided the way to do it. The belief was strong that the environment was an inexhaustible and ever renewable source

for human need and even human greed. But today, humans face environmental challenges unprecedented in the history of the planet. Within the current perspectives that deal with threats to the environment, there are some that concentrate more on efficient use of environmental resources by a sane handling of technology. But there are others that find fault with the ideological basis of the dominant technological-economic system. If our contemporary diagnosis must go beyond a mere management approach to a radical critique of ideology, there must follow a necessary focus on the lifestyles and personality configurations related to the destruction of the environment. This focus will make especially relevant the broader Buddhist way of looking at the human situation. It should be clear that environmental problems are not merely an issue for science and technology. The current crisis is not a crisis of the environment; rather, the crisis of the environment is a symptom of a deeper human crisis that raises fundamental questions about the values we uphold and the kind of lives we lead, raising basic issues of ethics, religion and philosophy.

The ecological crisis is part and parcel of the broader predicament of suffering encapsulated in the Buddhist notion of *dukkha*. The origin of suffering may be understood in terms of the affective roots of greed (*lobha*) and hatred (*dosa*) and the cognitive root of delusion (*moha*). Greed provides a strong base for the acquisitive drive, the pseudo-desires that we develop in contemporary times, competitiveness, and all the fuel necessary to run a society overtaken by excessive consumerism. The root hatred generates emotions of anger, resentment, and envy, as well the drive for aggressive pursuits. The ideological base for suffering, however, is the existential confusion regarding the nature of 'self' (*moha*). These roots remain the perennial basis of suffering over the ages, and have produced the technological and economic system humans use to dominate nature.

Today, environmental philosophers and ecologists agree that the earth is a very delicately balanced system of interdependent parts—an 'ecosystem'. The environment is conceived as a natural and social system in which humans and other organisms live and from which they draw their sustenance. The Buddha talks in certain contexts of physical

objects like tables and chairs, as well as mountains, trees and rivers. He further refers to solidity (*pathavi*), liquidity (*apo*), heat (*tejo*) and mobility (*vayo*). The Buddha sees the world as a network of many sided, reciprocal causal patterns that interact. The laws operating in the universe operate as physical laws (*utu-niyāma*), biological laws (*bija-niyāma*), moral laws (*kamma-niyāma*), psychological laws (*citta-niyāma*) and laws of liberation (*dhamma-niyāma*). These causal patterns help us to understand the world, and they condition our existence without determining our actions. By emphasising the process nature of the universe, the Buddha makes clear that we must neither passively accept the hazards of nature nor unduly try to dominate nature. Natural resources are available for use by humans and other species, but they are not meant for misuse.

Two related questions calling for discussion concern the role of religious values in environmentalism, and how Buddhism can contribute to a multi-religious and multi-cultural global outlook on the environment.

There has been some misunderstanding that religions convert nature into a mystery. John Passmore (1974:49), for example, says that the kind of mysticism advocated by religions is a greater menace to our future well-being than science and technology. According to Passmore, the idea of nature as sacred, as not to be tampered with or changed, but contemplated, is self-defeating. If our ecological problems are to be solved, we will have to tamper with, manipulate or control nature. According to Passmore (1974), 'mystical contemplation will not reveal to the chemist the origins of the...smog or enable an engineer to design an effective design to reduce its intensity'. Buddhism does not see any conflict in contemplating nature, appreciating it aesthetically and harnessing it for the sustainable use by humans (de Silva 1991b). Schumacher, who is attracted by the Buddhist critique of human needs and lifestyles based on right views and right effort, says that proper development will have wisdom, not merely about the means of development, but also the ends of development. The important question is not our competence regarding means but our realism and wisdom regarding ends. The fact that Schumacher (1993) refers to the Buddhist

perspective as 'realism' suggests that Buddhism is neither visionary nor romantic in its approach to environmentalism.

Religious pluralism is an important concern when one discusses religious values and environmentalism. One could make a distinction between liberation discourse and socio-ethical discourse in religions. When the Buddha was asked about the place of other religions within his perspective, he said that if there is any religion that upholds some sense of survival after death, some sense of good and bad, a concept of moral responsibility and free will, as well as a notion of higher reality, any such system may do a great deal of good to the world, though these systems may not help one to attain the Buddhist goal of liberation (*nibbāna*). Though at the level of liberation discourse one is confronted by metaphysical differences among religions, the similarities between the ethical codes of different religions and how they cohere with the law indicate that religions may work together on environmentalist concerns.

The modern Western paradigm for economic growth has been the subject of extensive critical assessment by scholars and environmental activists in the West as well as in Asia. During recent times, there has been also a great deal written on the ambiguities inherent in the notion of 'sustainable development'. The Buddhist analysis may be seen in terms of a recent critique of the dominating social paradigm made by Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlap (1992). Critics of economic growth feel that this paradigmatic view is responsible for environmental destruction, as well as social injustice and poverty. There is now an emphasis on moving away from these entrenched 'mental lenses' to a new way of looking at the world that emphasises the satisfaction of basic needs rather than the pseudo-desires created by modern consumerism, and encourages thriftiness in the use of natural resources, elimination of waste, co-operation, and the development of community and long-term global values.

There are three important strands of the Buddhist orientation towards nature. First, there is the general thread of thinking, which runs through some Indian philosophical systems, that says nature is an illusion. Change, flux, decay and unreality are often terms used to refer to the

external world, and Buddhism has its own way of appropriating them. Second, there is a dominating strand of thinking in Taoism and Zen Buddhism that admonishes humans to be attuned to nature, and which has a parallel in the early Buddhist tradition. Third, nature implies the understanding of the laws about the nature of things, especially the causal structure of the universe to which we have referred above. This way of looking at nature could be used to exploit nature or to pursue its sustainable use.

Schmithausen (1991) asks 'whether the attitude of the Buddhist tradition towards nature...is perhaps ambiguous comprising heterogeneous strands, among which some may favour protection of nature whereas others may have bearing on the conspicuous lack of resistance to the impact of Western civilisation'. But instead of looking at ambiguity, it is necessary to see how in traditional Buddhist cultures, these different strands have contextual relevance on different occasions and have meaning for both laypersons and monks. They have to be seen through the human-nature relationships of a Buddhist culture rather than the alienation models of Western civilisation. First, the acceptance of change in Buddhism is a corrective to the ethic of permanence that has infected the models of exploitation over nature, as if nature is an inexhaustible resource. The Buddhist perspective of thriftiness and the condemnation of waste (as different from miserliness) has also emerged within the same ethic. But along with this feature of Buddhist thinking, the rhythms of nature, of change, and of transience heighten one's appreciation of nature. Thus a Buddhist can look at the mirror of nature with true equanimity and discern the most profound truths. Responding to the different strands of life and nature calls for a refined sensibility, which is brought about by the blending of ethics and meditation in Buddhism.

The term 'illusion' has unfortunately been projected onto the Buddhist perception of the external world. Becoming a perfected one (*arahant*) does not mean that the tree one saw before has ceased to be a tree. Rather, one sees it differently, as one has lost attachment to the world, and discerns the process of change and transformation well. When, for instance, the perfected one is not assailed by contact, he is

like a man who cannot hear, see or smell. This implies a more refined and sensitive sensibility.

Attunement with nature emerges spontaneously—the transformation of the ‘self’ and transformation of nature go together. It would be wrong to say that the sage goes to the forest in an ‘instrumental sense’. The word ‘self’ here does not refer to the ‘self’ of wrong belief (created and projected through existential confusion), but the self of continuity without strict identity (see de Silva 1998b). It is true that the Buddhist monk or the layperson who practises the eight-fold noble path and lives close to nature is not yet perfect and thus will have degrees of existential confusion. But the norm of harmony and reciprocity does not smack of any instrumentality towards the non-human world. The notion of attunement to nature is given due expression in Zen Buddhism and is well captured in Taoism. In the discourses of the Buddha, metaphor, images and stories from nature abound. The Buddhist contemplative stance, the practice of mindfulness, and the loosening of the subject–object dichotomy, are all congenially rooted in the Buddhist human–nature orientation.

The third strand in the human–nature orientation provides analogies with the intervention of science in the causal structure of the universe. Mill (1969:379) says that ‘every alteration of circumstances alters more or less the laws of nature under which we act and by which every choice we make is either of ends or means’. Environmental intervention is not merely decided by the laws of the universe, but by Buddhist wisdom, which indicates when to intervene. What this strand of thinking indicates is that though Buddhism stands for harmony with nature, it does not become romantic or visionary, but is guided by a realism that is constrained by the laws of the universe, including moral and psychological laws. Thus Passmore’s contention that problems can be solved by thoughtful action and not by converting nature into a mystery fits well with what may be called ‘Buddhist environmentalism’.

One of the dimensions through which the Buddhist expresses attunement with nature is the aesthetic appreciation of nature. As a Japanese Buddhist scholar observes, ‘the joy of enjoying natural beauty

and of living comfortably in natural surroundings was expressed by the monks and nuns' (Nakamura 1978). In the Poems of the Elders (*Thēra-thēri-gātha*) there are references to the enjoyment of scenic beauty by those who achieved spiritual heights:

Whene'er I see the crane, her clear bright wings
 Outstretched in fear to flee the black storm cloud,
 A shelter seeking, to sage shelter borne,
 Then doth the river Ajakarani give joy to me
 Whene'er I see the crane, her plumage pale
 And silver white outstretched in fear to flee
 The black storm cloud, seeing no refuge high,
 The refuge seeking of the rocky cave,
 Then doth the River Ajakarani
 Give joy to me
 Who doth not love to see on either bank
 Clustered rose apple; trees in fair array
 Behind the great cave (of my hermitage)
 Or hear the soft croak of the frogs, well rid
 Of their undying mortal frames proclaim:
 Not from the mountain-streams
 Is't time today
 To flit. Safe is the Ajakarani
 She brings us luck. Here is it good to be (Th iv:196).

Venerable Kassapa's description of a natural setting is equally striking:

The upland glades delightful to the soul,
 Where the Kaveri spreads its wildering wreaths
 Where sound the trumpet-calls of elephants
 Those rocky heights with hue of dark blue clouds
 Where lies embossed many a shining lake
 Of crystal-clear cool waters, and whose slopes
 The herds of Indra cover and bedeck
 These are the hills where my soul delights (Th xvii:261, 4).

These poems, some of the finest embodiments of spiritual attainment and ecological sensibility, illustrate that those who attain various stages on the Buddhist path to perfection are able to become one with the natural surrounds.

Contemporary non-anthropocentric environmentalism and Buddhism

According to Buddhism, destruction of the environment emerges from egoism and greed. There are no attempts in Buddhism to define non-anthropocentricism or to search for intrinsic values in relation to nature. The expression of deep-rooted egoism and greed, whether it is directed towards other human beings or towards nature, is the manifestation of the same springs of action. There is no theoretical enterprise in Buddhism to determine the priorities of humanity over nature or nature over humanity; it is the reciprocal network of humans and nature that is the focus of the Buddhist analysis. The Buddha's focus is the 'egocentric' basis of humans, which explains many false ideologies, including anthropocentricism.

Anthony Weston feels there are communication blockages when issues about 'anthropocentricism' are brought within the framework of an anthropocentric culture. 'Rather than trying to unify or fine tune our theories, we require more pluralistic or explorative methods. We cannot reach theoretical finality: we can only co-evolve an ethic with transformed practice' (Weston 1992). As Weston points out, almost all ancient life patterns were 'mixed communities' involving humans and a tremendous variety of other creatures. 'One's identifications and loyalties lay not with the extended human species, but with a local and concretely realised network of relationships involving many different species'. The Buddhist scholar Daisaku Ikeda says, 'the Buddhist doctrine of the oneness of the living entity and its environment (*Esho Fumi*) focuses on the human being as part of the vast physical universe' (Ikeda nd). It is in this context that Ikeda observes the interlinkage between human relations and nature, as well as the relationship between self and the inner life. A recent concern about non-anthropocentricism, especially in Third World countries, is the right of any group to impose environmentalist concerns without heeding the basic need for equity. Such concerns need to be blended with a viable human-nature orientation. A Buddhist ethics of the environment would certainly consider such issues as equity and social justice important concerns.

The earliest Buddhist communities as they emerged in India were forest dwelling. It was the general custom at the time in India for those who were seeking a spiritual way of life to leave household life and wander from village to village (Kabilsingh 1987). The admonition to go to the forest, to the root of a tree and the empty places of nature (*sunṇagara*) is found in the discourses of the Buddha. It was a woodland culture of solitude, and quietude. One cannot, however, develop a sense of 'oneness' with the natural surroundings if one enters the forest with lust, attachment, aggressive impulses, fear and doubt. Buddha in his 'Discourse on Fear and Dread' mentions that persons who enter the forest with passions in their minds and hearts will be disturbed by the rustling of the wind, falling of the leaves, the movement of a peacock and breaking of a twig (M Tr i:16–24). Schmithausen's observations on what he calls the forest monks or the 'hermit strand' confirms this point:

...this is the attitude of the forest monk, the hermit, who is no longer afraid of the wild animals because he on his part does not threaten them but offers them safety and friendship, who is happy in the solitude of the wilderness because he has abandoned worldly desires and is content with little (Schmithausen 1991).

While giving a fitting description of the forest monk, he queries whether in seeking the wilderness for spiritual practice one is free from an anthropocentric element in one's evaluation:

...but even so in this attitude to wild nature as a whole, as an ambience or ecosystem comprising a specific set of species of animals and plants, is accorded a positive value, and on account of this positive evaluation it ought to be not only preserved but restored (Schmithausen 1991).

While the monk adds something to the place, rather than exploits its resources, there is existential confusion in the minds of those on the spiritual path. There remain residual traces of egoism, especially in the form of conceit, which are only transcended in the final stage of perfection; anthropocentrism will therefore remain till one becomes perfected. To use concepts like 'anthropocentrism' and 'instrumentality' in a context of this sort does violence to the ambience

of that early Buddhist culture. The attainment of enlightenment as a normative ideal represents a growing sense of oneness with the world around, and with the physical, social and the psychic world within. There is a gradually increasing sense of gentle interpenetration to all such relationships.

The Buddha was critical of animal sacrifice, as well as hunting animals for sport. Kings were expected to provide protected territory to the beasts of the forests and the birds of the air. The Buddhist ethical precept concerning the sanctity of life included animal life. The Buddha condemned the infliction of pain on living creatures. This sensitivity was extended to the minutest creatures. The rules for monks prohibiting cutting down trees, destroying plants, digging in the soil, and so forth may be considered as a warning that very minute forms of life may be destroyed by such actions. The precepts in which the Buddhist is expected to refrain from killing living beings does not cover plants. But, in a context where an all-encompassing attitude of universal reverence is expressed, a reverential attitude towards all plants is found. Plants have not been integrated into the doctrine of *kamma* and rebirth.

It is due to the Cartesian heritage that humans even during modern times consider animals as machines. Even if their behaviour cannot be morally assessed, animals show certain virtues that have a deep instinctual basis. The *Jātaka* stories, which come at a date later than the sermons of the Buddha, have admirable stories of animals exhibiting great virtues (Story 1964). The elephant Danapāla suffered from homesickness in captivity and refused food for the love of his mother. There is a story of Ghosaka, a child who was laid on the ground to be trampled by elephants but was saved by the compassionate beast walking around the child instead of over her. There is the story of the parrot that refused to leave a barren fig tree as the tree had given the parrot shade and nourishment when the tree was strong and young.

The only issue where the Buddha has taken a pragmatic stand concerns begging for alms. The social context in which the monks went for their alms made it necessary to accept what was offered. So long as the monks were sure that no animal was specially killed for them, the

taking of meat was not prohibited. The practice of compassion would of course cohere well with vegetarianism. The basic Buddhist ethical code consists of the five precepts that uphold the sanctity of life. Right ethical conduct also forms part of the eight-fold path, along with the practice of concentration and development of wisdom. Ethics in Buddhism do not mean simply adhering to rules; they involve the purification of the mind and development of character. Meta-ethical theoretical discussions are limited in Buddhism, and held with a purpose. As a good environmental ethicist, a Buddhist would always wish to give ethics a strong practical stance. There is a strong focus on the transformation of the individual, which has to precede any form of social activism in environmental concerns. They go together: (1) protecting oneself, one protects others, (2) protecting others, one protects oneself, (3) we have to begin this quest by transforming ourselves, before we extend it to the world.

Concluding thoughts on sustainable lifestyles

Two criticisms of religious involvement in environmental issues are that religious solutions to environmental concerns are visionary, and that there is a gap between theory and practice. It is important to emphasise the distinction between the inner limits and outer limits of environmentalism. 'The blame is strictly shifted to the nature and finitude of the environment, and engineers are scurrying to their drawing boards to redesign it here and there so that we can remain as what we are. It is forgotten that not our world, but we human beings are the causes of our problems, and only by redesigning our thinking and acting, not the world around us, can we solve them' (Lazlo 1978). We have to reform ourselves before we try to reform the world. Thus, as Laszlo maintains, questioning our values and developing lifestyles consistent with the emerging global values will revitalise the dormant visions of our cultures and spur the emergence of new levels of political will. Each individual has to make a small beginning. 'Small changes are beautiful. Small changes that seem insignificant in isolation can be great when they are simultaneously undertaken by many others' (Elgin 1981). Elgin says that the smallest action done with a loving appreciation

of life can greatly touch other people. Both the good and the bad are infectious. Thus any kind of environmentalism as social activism has to begin with the individual and be extended by generating a sense of interconnectedness with others. According to Elgin, whose thinking is very close to Buddhism, simplicity of living is the philosophy of environmental realism. A life that is externally simple and internally rich is also the Buddhist concept of sustainability.

Economic activity may be converted into a sacred and vital expression of our quest for meaning and significance. It was Schumacher who pointed out that prosaic activities like tilling the soil, making a brass tray, or even handling a machine may infuse a sense of vibrance and vitality into our daily life (see Schumacher 1993; Persig 1974). As long as our economic activities are not clouded by greed or envy, we shall develop the wisdom to see things as they are and see things in their roundness and wholeness. There are resources in the Buddhist tradition for developing a work ethic in keeping with a viable philosophy of environmentalism, and a life that is both rich and simple.

The rationale for cross-cultural environmental ethics

Introduction

While environmental ethics as an autonomous academic discipline has been groomed within philosophy departments, its entry into *environmental education* is a very recent phenomenon. Organisations such as the Unesco that have played an important role in developing environmental education have lately made a formal commitment to the integration of environmental ethics to environmental education. As far back as 1980, the *World Conservation Strategy* recognised five components for a global environmental ethic: interdependence of all living things (reciprocity), holism, respect for future generations, a principle of sustainable development and strategies to deal with the pressing issues of poverty. Thus ethics was recognised as a matter of explicit concern to the international community. 'Ultimately the behaviour of entire societies towards the biosphere must be transformed if the achievement of conservation objectives is to be assured. A new ethic, embracing plants and animals as well as people is required for human societies to live in harmony with the natural world... The long term task of environmental education is to foster or reinforce attitudes and behaviour compatible with this new ethic' (WCS 1980). Unesco has formally recognised the role of ethics in environmentalism as a necessary resource for launching sustainable development, as well as a base for 'dialogue among cultures' (Ghaznavi 1993). *The Taplow Declaration* (1992) gave a great deal of prominence to the value of cross-cultural environmental ethics for sustainable development (Hall 1992). Finally, the IDRC document *For Earth's Sake* emphasises the need for a southern agenda that could satisfy the demands of equity, ecology and ethics (IDRC 1992).

Against the background of international recognition of the need to link nature, ethics and culture through environmental education, this chapter explores issues pertaining to the integration of cross-cultural

environmental ethics to environmental education. Environmental ethics as a discipline within the university curriculum, both through teaching and research, has performed a very important function in emphasising the ethical values directed towards the non-human world, indicating the danger of technological fixes, and exploring how value conflicts are to be clarified, resolved and adjudicated. Ethics also has motivational power, as through moral ideals people are inspired to care for the world. Thus it goes beyond law and legal sanctions. The amount of environmental ethics research literature is immense, and the research has had some impact on ecologists and economists. But over the years, the continuing debates on issues like anthropocentrism have proved to be sterile and cyclical. But through healthy self-criticism, there has been an attempt to move, not from theory to practice, but from practice to theory, described as 'enabling practice' (Weston 1992).

The emphasis on more effective means of communication or effective environmental discourse, and the related issues about the entry of environmental ethics into the dialogue of cultures, are the main concerns of this chapter. Effective environmental discourse evokes sentiment and moves people. Max Oelschlaeger puts across the idea that for environmental ethics to work, it must be cognitively plausible, evoke sentiment and influence people: 'In so far as environmental ethics aspires to be effective discourse, then it needs to reconsider its pretense of producing knockdown arguments, philosophical foundations, and master narratives and begin attending to narratives that actually determine human behaviour' (Oelschlaeger 1995:10).

One of the ways in which we can develop effective environmental discourse is to speak in terms of the specific ecological settings in which human living is rooted, the rhythms and the dynamics of the ecosystems in which different people are located. It is the same point that Anderson brings out in his *Ecologies of the heart*:

The common theme with all these resource management ethics is not spiritual harmony with some disembodied and abstracted Nature, but actual personal and emotional involvement with the actual landscape and its non-human inhabitants. People interact with their surroundings.

In all cultures surroundings become meaningful, not just as sources of food and shelter, but as sources of beauty, power, excitement and other values' (Anderson 1996:174).

Effective environmental discourse and the teaching of environmental ethics

During recent times, there have been few attempts by those teaching applied ethics in universities to focus attention on pedagogy. Judith Andre makes the following observation:

Moral reasoning, then is more than the identification and evaluation of arguments moral reasoning is richer and looser than that; it rambles, teasing out implications and puzzling over meanings; sometimes it leaps in sudden understanding. It constructs arguments as well as evaluates them, searches for analogies, tries to imagine alternatives; it strives for coherence...it creates scenarios isolating values. In fact moral reasoning is so diverse that it is hard to teach; students appreciate some system to rely on (Andre 1991:360).

Attempts to teach disciplines like environmental ethics and bioethics beyond the traditional classroom contexts to professionals, as well as in adult education and other non-formal programs, have called for a flexibility and resilience in teaching methodologies. There has also been a kind of implicit criticism of certain narrow epistemological models that have dominated the teaching of ethics in these areas. While the rigours of philosophical analysis do give us a good method to address issues in environmental ethics and perceiving the world in moral terms, translating this message to have an impact on our professional, social and personal lives calls for a wide variety of strategies and techniques of pedagogy.

A second and an equally important point is that, in the area of integrating ethics into environmental education, there is a need for adopting the kind of environmental discourse we use in terms of the cultural frameworks of different regions. 'An exploration of non-Western traditions, and of alternative voices within our own Western tradition, is crucial in developing informed environmental awareness' (Vitek 1992:152).

The very texture of ethical discourse in some of the Eastern systems may not necessarily create the kind of dichotomies found in Western ethical systems or the kind of 'schizophrenia' that Michael Stocker found in Western ethics (Stocker 1976). They need to be studied against their own contexts and background. Whether we speak of the more stylised philosophical ethics or the less sophisticated vernacular ethics, it is necessary to understand their logic against a regional background, if environmental education is to use effective environmental discourse duly contextualised.

There is no purpose in maintaining the above stances as mere conceptual points, but culturally-oriented environmental ethics need to be explored by encountering the people that live in these regions. The 'Environment, ethics and education' project developed in Southeast Asia in 1993 was a pilot project of this kind (de Silva 1993a). Out of the four conferences that formed part of this project, the one entitled *The teaching of environmental ethics and values through Asian folklore* did demonstrate the great value of developing a program on cross-cultural environmental ethics. There has also been a very healthy interaction between the attempts to develop new thinking in developmental economics and cross-cultural values. It has been pointed out that there is a strong normative prescription for non-self-interested behaviour in some of the religious and cultural traditions of Asia. The value of culture stories with an ecological reference and the challenges to neo-classical economic theory from traditional Asian values are topics to be examined here.

The logic of culture stories and their ecological reference

First we shall look at the term 'culture' in the context of environmentalism and then briefly locate the growing importance of culture in the history of environmental education. Secondly, we shall clarify the terminology of the phrase 'culture stories', and thirdly review the main contributions of the conference devoted to environment and culture, especially the culture stories bearing environmental messages (de Silva 1993a; 1993b).

The term 'culture' as defined in dictionaries has three important meanings: a refined understanding of the arts and other intellectual achievements of a country; a classical heritage of the customs and a civilisation of a particular time or people; the original etymological meaning, as a nourishing human habitat. In this chapter we are concerned with this third strand of meaning which considers culture as emerging out of the interaction between humans and nature. In fact, in the very distant past there was a greater link between the diversity of human cultures and the diversity of healthy biosystems. They were mixed communities with strong links between humans and the fauna and the flora of a region. These biotic systems provided a miniature universe for the rhythms of life, work and leisure. It is of interest to note the comments of an agriculturist that the 'best agriculture for any region is the one that mimics the region's natural ecosystems' (Jackson 1992). The poetry, art forms and folk drama that emerged from the long sessions of leisure between phases of agricultural activity give us some insights into the ethos of their culture. They were all integrated aspects of a holistic world. Looking at the Maori people of Aotearoa, or New Zealand, it has been observed:

In such cultures, sustainability will be inherent to people's lives; environmentally sound behaviour will not be a separate area of life but will be both widely accepted and integrated into everyday life along with economic, artistic, spiritual, family, friendship, political and other concerns... Obviously, the people of Southeast Asia have developed a diversity of traditions which can similarly be identified and promoted, as an integrated part of sustainable development (Gunn 1993).

Another participant from the Western world at the conference, Martha Johnson, presented a paradigmatic example of such a culture, the Dene culture of the aboriginal people in Northern Canada (Johnson 1992). In her book *Lore: Capturing traditional environmental knowledge*, Johnson points out that traditional environmental knowledge is a way of thinking transmitted through oral tradition, that it is holistic (where for instance science can turn out to be reductionist), mainly qualitative rather than quantitative, rooted in a social context, and derived from long term experience of one locality, and that it is a collective, cumulative experience based on a world view.

Though some of the papers from the Southeast Asian participants were more in the nature of piecemeal samples of culture stories, there is a rich mine of material that needs to be explored. But before commenting on the value of such material, we need also to look at the concepts of traditional environmental knowledge or indigenous knowledge with some caution. The IDRC Social Policy Program Director indicated the need for such caution:

Pressures to find quick solutions to the pressures confronting industrialized culture lead to romanticized versions of traditional cultural knowledge. Too often it is perceived as an ancient pre-science that holds universal solutions to modern world problems. Unfortunately, these perceptions fail to grasp the integral, holistic and cultural roots of traditional knowledge (IDRC 1993).

Now that I have clarified in some detail the way in which I am using the word culture in this chapter, it is also necessary to locate the emergence of the concept of culture in the development of environmental education programs. From a historical point of view, in the way that the Stockholm conference of 1972 was a landmark in the development of environmental education, the 15th session of the IUCN in 1981 was a great landmark in the integration of the concept of traditional environmental knowledge into environmental education. This conference recommended that heads of governments should:

- take into account the still-existing, very large reservoir of environmental knowledge, philosophy and experience within local cultures which must provide a significant basis for this evolution of future management policies and planning actions;
- provide the means for local people who maintain ecologically sound practice to play a primary role in all stages of development in the area they identify with, so that they can participate and benefit, directly, in a manner which is consistent with their values, time-frames and decision making processes;
- seek continuous support of these local people in shaping and implementing conservation strategies and plans, in order to

considerably increase present conservation potential for achieving the goals of the World Conservation Strategy;

- and foster further research into traditional life styles and human ecology.

Thus with these developments, the thesis that environmental planning and conservation should pay heed to the cultural context, and that consequently there was a need for a revival of interest in traditional environmental knowledge, were ideas that became part and parcel of the ideology of environmentalism. This also emphasised the need to bring concrete benefits to indigenous people.

The term 'culture story' was used in collecting material for this project as it was a term of ordinary discourse, rather than the more theory-embedded terms like 'folk lore'. The term was loose enough to cover culturally-entrenched perspectives on cultivation, intuitive strands of knowledge of sustainable practices, environmental values, rituals, symbols, proverbs, folk songs, taboos, superstitions and so on. The participants at the conference looked at folk beliefs about plants and animals, nursery rhymes, children's poetry, riddles, proverbs, farmers' night vigil songs, batik-making, drama, beliefs about wealth, luck and prosperity, building according to landscape, and more.

It has been observed by some scholars that there is something unique about the texture of such ecological insights. The thesis that is being developed is that such knowledge is not exactly mirroring external reality, but explores ways of sustaining life, of legitimating interactions between society and nature. While this point is important, most of these beliefs concerning sustainable resource management are really based on long-term observation of nature, such as the system known as feng-shui (wind and water)—the belief among Chinese that dragons live in the mountains and to disturb them by cutting too sharply to the rocky surface would cause floods and landslides. Such beliefs are based on observation over a long period of time and are incorporated into local cosmology, so that they have some emotional investment (Anderson 1996).

There were some general observations about the role of culture stories compiled from the different country reports from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Dene culture in Canada, as well as less detailed material from South Asia. The Indonesia study presented by Retno Soetarajon (1993) was an integrated study of the interactions between the ecology and the culture of the region. The Malaysia report focussed on the Ministry of Education's attempts to use culture stories with environmental messages for integrating ethics into environmental education (Siti 1993). The Singapore study looked at the Singapore Green Plan and its attempts to generate green consciousness, and also the possibilities of drawing a sense of rootedness for environmentalism from the unique co-existence of Chinese, Malay and Indian folk traditions (Savage 1993). The Thailand study (Ratanakul 1993) and the Philippines Study (Gonzaga 1993) had interesting insights for integrating cultural ideas for environmental education, and insights into sustainable development, including the developmental issues faced by Third World countries. I shall summarise some of the central themes of the conference, drawing from these studies.

- Culture stories help us to enter the life forms, texture and rhythms of life and nature in traditional communities. The idioms, images, phrases and languages, as well as the symbols, proverbs, folk songs, belief systems (including apparent superstitions) and values are quite instructive for understanding the ethos of different cultures. Within this framework, the main focus was on culture stories with environmental messages
- The kind of 'epistemological model' that was used was not some attempt to uncover an external reality or generate theoretical knowledge that may be presented in the form of clear propositions. It was more an attempt to get a vivid picture of the network of society-nature interactions.
- Conference participants looked at simple and direct messages in the culture stories, as well as encoded symbolic messages.
- Getting the past into perspective was important. The recovery of oral traditions and communal memory is a concept that particularly

needs to be integrated into the curriculum for environmental education. But there has to be an emphasis on the ethical messages.

- Getting students acquainted with key concepts for ecological orientation is important. In fact such concepts provide the base for environmental ethics. Some work done in India on the notion of reciprocity is of great interest here. The concepts of nurturing webs of dependence, interconnections and sustainable development emerged in many of the sessions, very much rooted in Asian philosophical and cultural perspectives. The notion of reciprocity has ecological, social and ethico-cultural roots in the Asian context. There was also a conjunctive logic in the phrase 'human and nature' (*eshofumi* in Japanese), rather than humans or nature, a disjunctive logic.
- Different types of environmental values were discussed, and this was very clearly presented in the Malaysian study. The idea of getting students (especially children) to identify different environmental values, such as life-sustaining, aesthetic, symbolic and economic values through culture stories would again be an important lesson in grasping the conceptual facets of environmental ethics. Orienting students to identify the logic of different environmental values is important.

Apart from getting a kind of entry into the culture-nature interactions in the region, and developing techniques for teaching basic environmental ethics concepts through culture stories, there was also an important concern with the idea of developing the notion of 'ecological sensibility' through environmental education, using multifaceted techniques of narratives, poetry, proverbs, symbols, folk drama and so on, an idea with great potential. There is no real need to create a big gulf between propositional discourse and narrative discourse, and it has even been observed that, in a sense, narratives are propositions amplified by experience, and propositions may turn out to be condensed narratives (Carson 1994:23). This is not an attempt to create a gulf between rationality and sensibility, but merely restore their harmony. As part of the environment, ethics and education program of the IRC in

Singapore, a project on Buddhist culture stories dealt in great detail with methods of teaching environmental ethics in Buddhism by harmonising rationality and sensibility (de Silva 1998). Thus it is important that programs on pedagogy and effective environmental discourse deal with this fragmentation of our reason and emotions—a kind of compartmentalisation that is perhaps endemic in contemporary lifestyles.

In the oral cultures, ecological sensibility was nurtured through the art of story-telling, and listening was an important strategy of education. Today in India, the Gurukul for Holistic Education program emphasises the notions of listening and perceiving nature in the most direct way. The great guru (teacher) is nature. Such projects highlight the need for awakening the senses and a fuller development of our intuitions and imagination.

Sustainable development and traditional Asian values

One of the more tangible ways in which cultural values are being related to sustainable development may be debates on ethics, values and economic development (Kapur 1996). Studies of this sort are relevant to the central themes discussed in this chapter, as we could clearly infer from these studies that an analysis of traditional culture stories in the context of sustainability is not just some abstract academic concern. It would be useful to review this position in the light of the collection of culture stories from Buddhist cultures (de Silva 1998).

Kapur's thesis is that the ethical codes of a society as embodied in its culture have an important relation to the economic performance of that society, and that the communitarian elements in the prevailing cultures are a valuable resource for economic development. They also emotively predispose the people towards co-operative ventures. He attempts a critical assessment of the behavioural postulates of neo-classical economic theory, that economically people are motivated by self-interest and rational means to achieve their goals. He upholds that this (a) may not be descriptively accurate of certain societies, (b) may generate predictions that can be refuted, and also (c) may not be a fruitful

normative position. He also raises important puzzles, such as whether it is possible for people to act in non-self-interested ways in other spheres—as friends, relatives and community leaders. He quotes from the main religious traditions to indicate their clear stand in upholding non-purely self-interested behaviour.

Kapur's reference to the issue about basic needs is also important. He observes that 'Any ethics-based approach to economic development must pay careful attention to the issue of basic needs' (Kapur 1996:151). He also cites the case of Thailand, Sri Lanka and other countries in Asia with a large Buddhist population, where the basic needs record is very good. In fact, he makes references to Moon's study of basic needs: '...it appears that the fine basic needs performance ascribed to Asian countries is actually found in only nine countries coded as Buddhist' (Moon 1991:252).

Buddhist culture stories

In line with this focus on the notion of basic needs in Buddhist countries, it would be useful to select an example of a culture story from the research studies in this area (de Silva 1998). Helena Norberg-Hodge's study of the Ladakh culture in Nepal gives the example of a vibrant culture permeated with the ethic of sustainability. Though contemporary socio-economic trends have changed the rhythms of this culture a little, it remains an embodiment of the messages of sustainability found in Buddhist texts and stories. She makes a graphic description of this village found in the shadow of the great Himalayan mountains. The majority of Ladakhis are self-supporting farmers living in small settlements in remote mountain valleys, where the size of the village depends on the availability of water. Like many traditional cultures that have grown in challenging surroundings, the Ladakhis 'exhibit an exceptional sensitivity in managing their environments and a keen awareness of their place in the greater natural order' (Norberg-Hodge 1992:42). Their religious orientation is Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama is their spiritual leader. Their religion, festivities, work and leisure are all integrated into a very holistic orientation.

I was beginning to experience the 'wholeness' of this way of life. For the Ladhakis there are no great distinctions or separations between work and festivity, between human spirituality and attending to the natural environment. All one's actions are integrated and given meaning in the cycle of existence (Norberg-Hodge 1992:45).

The conceptual apparatus of nurturing, webs of dependence and the notion of sustainability are all embedded in the way that Ladakhis are immersed in their agriculture, leisure-time activities and religious rituals. 'There is a greater emphasis on relativity than any Western language I know. Most strikingly the verb "to be" has more than twenty variations' (Norberg-Hodge 1992:50). They do not share our enthusiasm to categorise and compartmentalise the world. One of the most interesting linguistic items was the word *semba*, which is a cross between mind and heart, a base for a sensibility cutting across the dichotomies of mind and body, reason and intuition. 'Also reflecting the Buddhist view of reality, the Ladhaki sense of reality is based on a complex web of interconnection and constant change, rather than a notion of static isolated individuality' (Norberg-Hodge 1992:51). They tend to be open to the uniqueness of situations, and their sense of self is extensive and inclusive; they do not retreat behind walls of self-protection. Their intuitive feel for the notion of the impermanence of things cuts across any rapacious acquisitive drive. The doctrines of disharmony (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*) and non-self (*anatta*) give form and direction to the Buddhist human-nature orientation (de Silva 1998). Though they value their life and living beings around them, they tend to think that this life is one among many. There is sadness at the loss of someone dear, but there is no desperate finality about it.

The most important point about the Ladakhi from the standpoint of this chapter is that self-reliance and frugality colour their attitude to work, life, rituals, art and music. The word frugality itself means in the Ladakhi context fruitfulness or making a lot out of little, which is perhaps a little different from usages in the West. 'Being careful with limited resources is not miserly—rather it is frugality in the original sense of fruitfulness getting more out of little' (Norberg-Hodge 1992:46). In fact there is a classic discourse of the Buddha along these lines:

When the monk receives new robes, the old robes are not to be completely discarded, but to be used as coverlets; when the coverlets are old, they are to be converted into mattress covers; old mattress covers are to be converted into rugs, rugs into dusters, and even the tattered dusters are to be put together with clay and be used for repairing cracks on the floor and walls (Vin ii:291).

In the Buddhist discourses, thriftiness, generosity, sharing, industriousness, and earning by the sweat of one's brow all form a rich tapestry of a simple and contented life style. Ladakh has undergone change, and a complete return to the past is impossible, but the Ladakh experience indicates that there are alternative paths to development.

Concluding thoughts

Contemporary goals and lifestyles have created a gulf between the spirit and ethos of these culture stories and the interconnections that people today make with their culture, nature, society and technology. But the moral fibre of our society and the nature of its public discourse have to fall in line with the call to implement an ethic of sustainability. The call for environmental justice makes the crucial point that there may be emerging contradictions in the notion of a sustainable ethic, especially if there are conflicts over environmental risks between north and south. If, below the surface of the call for an environmental ethic, there is an undercurrent of uncritical economic growth and plundering of resources, a new momentum has to come from the regional bases of self-reliance and development. The plea for ecological and cultural pluralism has taken a strong turn today, as these issues are also blended with the search for environmental justice. But if the sustainability ethic becomes a mere cover for subtler forms of exploiting nature and the destruction of traditional support systems, the search for effective environmental discourse will be merely moving towards a mirage, and there will be no magic in this term. Environmental ethics has a certain distance to travel before it becomes effective environmental discourse. While environmental ethics respects global values, it has to become effective environmental discourse by using a multi-faceted pedagogy, and also integrating the concepts of ecological and cultural pluralism

and environmental justice. Issues concerning cultural empowerment and its linkages with a global ethic need also to be related to issues concerning social justice. Thus, in our search for an ethic of sustainability, the development of cross-cultural environmental ethics has important practical implications. We need an agenda that can equally satisfy the demands of ecology, equity and ethics.

Philosophers in the West do not have the luxury of teaching environmental ethics in their entrenched academic categories, but need to renew perspectives and be acquainted with what is happening in Asia. There is not merely a crisis in nature but also a crisis in environmental justice. Even the philosophy of basic needs may degenerate into a slogan, and 'sustainable development' may become an insidious cover for a policy of uncritical economic growth. The claim that a society can work towards the material, psychological and spiritual wellbeing of the people without engaging in an economic rat race is a simple idea largely written on the landscapes and mindscapes of traditional cultures. This is an age where not merely in the West, but even in the minds of the political leaders of South and Southeast Asia, contradictions in the notion of sustainable development continue to generate confusion.

Though it is possible to change the minds of people and leaders through education, pessimists say that breaking the momentum of a whole socio-economic system is like waving a red handkerchief to a moving train. 'But something needs to be done to slow the train and send it in other directions—or to put a tram in its place' (Arnold and Hess 1994). Hopefully these challenging reflections will provide avenues for critical and creative thinking, exploring issues that are of particular relevance to Asia.

Ethics, work and the emotionally intelligent executive

The inward call

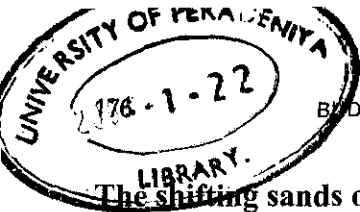
Many of us seem to have an inborn inclination to blame our problems on external circumstances, on forces outside our control. We deflect attention away from ourselves and our own inner states, and focus on something else. Nowhere is this more evident than in modern business...I suggest that the single most important factor for dealing with all the problems we now face in our business lives is our ability to look within and examine the inner foundations of our business practices and business relationships (Morris 1997:ix).

Leading meaningful lives

Actually, as a society we have made an art of separating who we are from the work we do. This ultimately has robbed our work and, in many ways, our lives of meaning. Reversing this processes is not straightforward or easy. It is, however, possible—but not through the means we normally associate with either work or social interaction (Cairnes 1998:7).

Loosening our mind-sets

I know that most men, including those at ease with the problems of greatest complexity, can seldom accept the most simple and obvious truth if it would be such as to oblige them to admit the falsity of conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, which they have proudly proclaimed to others and which they have woven thread by thread into the fabric of their lives (Leo Tolstoy, in Cairnes 1998:54).



The shifting sands of ethical theories, principles and paradigms

It is difficult to convince technocrats, bureaucrats and management executives that by looking deeply into ethical issues, we may see our economic and socio-political problems in a new light. But a miniature change (though not a revolutionary change) of this sort has emerged in academic and professional circles. The growth of applied ethics in philosophy has generated a great deal of interest in the relevance of ethics and values to environmental issues and bio-medical concerns, as well as business, management and economics. The pressures of environmental issues and ecological perspectives of a very wide-ranging nature have emphasised the need to replace a fragmented curriculum with a more humanistic and holistic one.

To achieve a sustainable society, we need the specialized skills of many people: environmental scientists, planners, economists and educators. But skills on their own are not enough. We need a shared vision, though not a rigid, inflexible vision—an environmental ethic (Gunn 1998:xiii).

In the early 1990s the Harvard Business School responded to these emerging tides in the educational and professional world in their attempts to explore a rediscovery of purpose in the frontiers of management and business studies. In America, the real need for a rediscovery of purpose and a new vision in the world of business and management was driven by growing environmental issues, the concerns about industrial competitiveness, the decay of inner cities, changes in the workplace and family, employee mistrust, and adjustments to new technology.

It is in the context of flux and challenge and failing faith that business educators must somehow prepare their students to assume roles of social and fiduciary responsibility. Business and government most often fail to realise their responsibilities not from an inadequacy of tools, techniques and theory but from an absence of vision, a failure of leadership, in inconsistency or insufficiency of values that saps all sense of individual or organisational purpose or responsibility (Piper 1995:18).

Piper also mentions that ironically, as this need to emphasise corporate responsibility and accountability rose to the surface, the MBA curriculum was emphasising quantification, formal models, formulas that minimised any debate about ethical values. Thus he emphasised the need to develop a concept of business education that is more than the transfer of skills and knowledge: a blending of our intellect and spirit. He says that it should be 'an endeavor that engages one's character and values, spurs one's imagination and sense of meaning, and stimulates one's sense of responsibility and accountability and one's desire to lead and create' (Piper 1995:19).

Once this framework for business and management education received some kind of acceptance in the academic and professional communities, new ethics and management education courses in this area quickly followed. Original case studies on ethical issues in such areas as banking, accountancy, medical technology, mining and public regulation are now available, and they illuminate the complex processes of applying ethical theory and principles to decision making in commercial enterprises.

But a new predicament appears to be emerging, as the excessive theorising and academic debates on these issues develop. We witness a proliferation of literature, ethical theories, continuous academic debates, a minor industry in this area, and yet a widening gap between rhetoric and reality. Elsewhere, I have discussed this phenomenon, making a case for effective ethical discourse that will have an impact on people and move them to make their ethics a way of life (de Silva 1998a). The following words by Oelschlaeger (1995:10) may be extended with great relevance to management and business ethics:

Its discourse must be cognitively plausible. Second, it must evoke sentiment. Finally, ecophilosophical discourse must influence people, that is, gain a wider audience and hearing. In so far as environmental ethics aspires to be effective discourse, then it needs to reconsider its pretense for producing knockdown arguments, philosophical foundations and master narratives and begin attending to narratives that actually determine human behaviour...people must feel a compelling need to change course and redirect behaviour.

Instead of taking sides on competing theories of ethics, it is necessary to combine their use depending on context and relevance. The conflict between traditions such as the Anglo-Saxon analytical, and the continental phenomenological and interpretative traditions, has obstructed the use of a multi-dimensional pedagogy in the classroom and the use of more informal settings for teaching professionals. During recent times, the case for a multi-dimensional pedagogy has entered the teaching of ethics. Elements such as narratives, poetry, metaphors, paradoxes and conversation are being used by students and teachers who have gone beyond 'the argument culture in philosophy'. For students and teachers, analysing decisions, critically examining contradictions in ethical positions, and exploring the relevance of empirical evidence for accepting an ethical position, all encourage rigour and conceptual precision as skills. But if one is merely fed on the philosophical diet of an argumentative culture, one loses sight of a great perception that there are other ways of solving problems, and this is especially so when we are searching for a new management ethic.

These are times when mere intellectual conviction does not work. Antonio Damasio, a neurologist who studied the impairment of patients who had damaged the prefrontal amygdala circuit, made an important discovery. He found that the patients' decision-making was flawed, not because of any deterioration of their reasoning powers, but because they could not experience certain feelings and emotions. While they had the requisite knowledge, attention, memory, ability to use language, make calculations and deal with the logic of abstract problems, there was a marked alteration in their ability to experience feelings. The absence of emotion can be no less damaging, no less capable of compromising rationality than the ill effects of emotions on reason. Damasio's patient Phineas Gage showed a discrepancy between degenerated character and intact instruments of rationality (Damasio 1994). More recent research and publications by Joseph Ledoux (1998), and David Goleman (1996) have been followed by a stream of literature on the place of emotions in our personal and public life.

The shift of perspective from the argumentative culture to the therapeutic culture has significant implications for the development of

a new management ethic, as well as the reinventing of a corporate ethic. This chapter will explore and develop the framework for a corporate ethic on these lines. Thus while we still stick to Piper's concept of business education as a blending of intellect and spirit—as an endeavour that engages one's character and values, spurs one's imagination, instills a sense of meaning and stimulates one's sense of responsibility and accountability—we seek to give this development renewed vigour and a new direction.

Converting brass into gold: Exploring new pastures for a work ethic

Reality, it turns out, isn't always the way we would like it to be. Living is full of ups, downs and sideways—bumps, glitches and trials. Nowhere would this seem more so than in the workplace, where most people feel controlled by external factors and continually under pressure from customers, shareholders, bosses, unions, colleagues, markets, suppliers, employees, and increasingly technological innovations and information overload. At work, people are frustrated by organisational politics, daunted by ever increasing workloads and always feel a threat of retrenchment and redundancy...I have found that is exactly why work is a wonderful learning place for personal, emotional and spiritual transformation...No matter how bad or good we judge a situation, we always have control over how we deal with it—this is the secret to personal freedom, joy and peace of mind (Cairnes 1998:3–4).

Having described both the malady and the remedy, Cairnes says that to comprehend things in this way, one needs a special kind of intelligence. This is a fresh pathway for attaining the kinds of targets laid down by Piper, of blending intellect and spirit, engaging one's character, spurring the moral imagination and raising the sense of responsibility. Instead of summoning ethical principles, protocols and directives, we befriend our private demons of fear, depression, despair and anger; we accept and work with our limitations and we consider the obstacles we encounter as our teachers. Thus we work on a radically deep inner level, and this brings us a connectedness, instead of a feeling of separation, to all others and the realities around us. It is both a moral and therapeutic approach that heals the gap between personal experience

and social action. In doing this, we see a link between who we are and the work we do. In befriending the demons of pain and despair, we do not cut ourselves off from our feelings, but gradually see them transform into connectedness and compassion for oneself and others. Cairnes calls this a journey of heroes, comparing it with the quest of warriors who march from crisis to crisis with an adrenaline rush.

To embrace all parts of ourselves and the world is a mark of real compassion. The claim that one can work on pain and crisis and make them a base for transformation is what Jung termed converting brass into gold. Technically it is referred to as 'resilience'. In a contemplative meditative tradition, this is re-teaching a thing its loveliness, and the potentiality for compassion towards oneself and others. This is the pathway for developing what Cairnes calls a corporate heart. She has illustrated the thesis about heroes and the corporate heart with a number of case studies. Polly Young-Eisendrath (1996:7) discusses how adversity may be transformed into insight, compassion and renewal: 'It is in time of need that we break habitual barriers between ourselves and others and experience intimate connections with others, often for the first time'.

Another perspective that brings out a concept kindred to resilience can be found in the work of Graham Little, which comes from a different kind of context, linking up the personal space for emotions with the public space for emotions:

Illiterate about the emotions, we suppress or deny what we feel, we let them interfere with our thinking and undermine our best intentions or let them take us over or get out of hand. Becoming literate we can recognise our feelings, tolerate them long enough to learn something from them, and eventually make them a more or less integrated part of our lives and work. Emotional literacy requires us to revise the habit of avoiding and voiding our feelings—leaving them as it were, rogue—and begin *using* them to enlarge our sense of who we are and what we can do (Little 1999:17).

He makes an interesting extension to the public sphere and says that 'emotional literacy is an essential guide to the human element in

social and economic policy' (Little 1999:19). Little also engages in a powerful critique of economic rationalism and corporate barons that perpetuates the system, and a fascinating discussion of political leadership models, particularly of real leaders who can hold on to the notion of 'shared sacrifice' for a nation during difficult times. He sums up his discussion of leadership in terms of the word 'containing', taken from the psychologist Wilfred Bion:

In ordinary usage, 'containing' refers to restraint, such as containing a bush fire, but here it means more: not just bottling feeling up, not putting a lid on emotion, but one person (the leader) *taking* in disorganised and toxic emotion, *metabolising* it, then *returning* it in manageable form. It is a gift of listening that calms and energises at the same time (Little 199:271).

This is an eloquent description of emotional literacy and resilience applicable to the personal, political and corporate spheres.

New approaches to ethics

Attempts at critical self-reflection in sub-fields of applied ethics like environmental ethics, bioethics, and management and business ethics are a healthy sign. The system building type of ethics and self-critical reflection in ethics are often found together. Environmental ethicists started the movement as far back as 1994, with the publication of a series of papers entitled 'Where theory meets practice' (Ferre and Hartel 1994). More recently, a bioethics group has ventured on a similar project of critical self-reflection. The editor of their book says, 'This volume has been a rich opportunity for me to turn to constructive effect my uncertainties about the nature and goals of academic medical ethics' (Evans 1998). Academics, students and professionals in business and management education should also be open to opportunities for such critical self-reflection. I have already emphasised the point that moral perspectives gain strength and depth through the spirit of resilience that helps one deal with crisis, obstacles, and gives one the ability to contain pain and despair. An article in the work on bioethics mentioned above also cites the value of resilience:

...the replacement of genuine moral reflection by procedures and protocols finally paralyzes people's capacity for moral thought. Moral life requires the personal facing of genuine difficulty, disorder and uncertainty. The more important goals of moral reflection are not so much (ready-made) answers to moral problems as the development of authentic moral character (Tichtchenko 1998:51–52).

This is not to deny the importance of rules, precepts, principles and theoretical perspectives in moral reflection. But to use and apply them we need to first immerse ourselves in the reflective concerns of morality, real life challenges, existential encounters and practical contexts. Making mechanical inferences from deductive models in ethics has dangers. Such actions may lose relevance, miss complexities of contexts and lack the spirit of real commitment and authenticity. There are many who know the principles and their deductive implications, but fail to articulate and verbalise them; and there are those who fall to temptation, as they have lost the well-springs of morality that keep us awake and fresh. But even more importantly, there are those who collapse in crisis and complexity, in spite of the ethics they know so well.

There are many significant lines of thought and creative directions for education and ethics, that have emerged from the currents of critical self-reflection by serious scholars, academics and professionals engaged in teaching and practising environmental, medical and business ethics. One important idea is to broaden and diversify the methods and tools of teaching, ranging from the rigours of logical reasoning and findings of hard data and statistics, to more imaginative encounters through narrative ethics, stories, case studies, fiction, poetry and films. While we do not learn ethics only in crisis situations, as a medical practitioner concerned with ethics remarked, 'abstractions of ethics' have to be counterpoised with the 'chaos of advice', and that is what you see in the midst of medical emergencies, car accidents and fires (Ofstard 1998:68). But this does not mean that we have to feed our moral perspectives on a diet of moral dilemmas and tragic conflicts. Going through a difficult time in one's personal life is different from the solving of innumerable varieties of hypothetical moral dilemmas cited in books on applied ethics. Drawing on such books, we generate a psychological distance between the student and real crisis situations, destroy the sense

of connectedness with others. I have discussed the limitations of over-emphasising moral dilemmas for teaching ethics in a recent study (de Silva 1998a:91–109, 183). Here, I refer to the words of Mark Gold (1995:4):

Contrary to popular belief, we are not faced with some terrible option to save either our dog our child, or our calves rather than the starving children of Africa. More often than not concern for one is completely compatible with sympathy for the other.

This is an important point. We have to confer a sense of majesty and magnanimity, as well as a kind of clinical sacredness to our routine life. In the Buddhist contemplative tradition we speak of the moment to moment flow of the mind, in which may reside the little drops of water of disappointment and the little drops of the sands of craving, which go to make the mighty ocean and the great land of suffering. It is because our routine lives get infected with habitual forms of deception, automatic responses and thoughtless behaviour, that we expect the spark of a crisis to make us re-think the whole tenor of our lives. But we must remember that it is in the routine, prosaic, silent, ordinary life, that we like ants build moral dexterity, industriousness and integrity. Thus, ethics can add a sense of enchantment and beauty to every moment of our lives. The little details, real situations, the particulars are important—reminding us of Iris Murdoch's reflections on 'nostalgia for the particular'. She says that the moral life unfolds in the moment to moment flow of attention: 'The moral life on this view, is something that goes on continually, not something that is switched off in between the occurrence of explicit choices' (Murdoch 1970:37). The ups and downs of life need not always be seen in terms of existential crisis or moral dilemmas; the prosaic movements of what I call 'pedestrian suffering' cover the greater part of our routine lives. The spark of a personal crisis or the mere listening to a report of a disaster certainly provide a springboard for perspectival changes in our lives, but the movement to movement flow of our lives is the great theatre where heroes emerge and live. That is the real base for reinventing the corporate spirit.

Another strand of ethical thinking that deals with moral education emphasises the importance of what are now called *communicative*

ethics. In addition to developing self-awareness of one's thoughts and feelings, it is also necessary to reach others. In his study of the role of ethics in business, Frederick Bird emphasises the use of communicative ethics in counteracting what he calls moral silence, moral deafness and moral blindness. Moral silence is the failure to verbalise the moral convictions one holds; moral deafness is a failure to listen to moral issues raised by others; moral blindness is the failure to recognise moral issues. After examining these issues, Bird says that he is attempting to 'set forth an alternative view of ethics not in rules and commands, but in what I refer to as good conversation, especially in interactive, formative, problem-solving and self orienting moral discourse' (Bird 1996:23).

According to Bird, there are many reasons people voice moral concerns. Some of the important and constructive reasons are as follows: interactive—to identify problems, to negotiate, to explore alternatives, to reach agreements; formative—to inspire, to motivate, to cultivate moral character; legislative—to determine rules and principles; policing—to identify and punish violators; ideological—to offer a defence of certain arrangements of power and privilege; orienting—to provide personal guidance on how to lead one's life. Speaking out in constructive ways and good conversation—especially in the interactive, formative, problem-solving and self-orienting moral discourse—will make a difference to big organisations (Bird 1996). It is difficult, if not impossible, to create morally responsible organisations, unless the people in the organisations are oriented towards developing moral character. Some research indicates that changes in moral character are hard to develop in big, impersonal and complex organisations, but are best developed in groups with close affectionate ties like the family, or religious groups with a sense of identity. An emotional core of empathy and connectedness provides a congenial soil for group moral orientations. It seems to be that smaller groups, even within large organisations, may provide good core orientations.

Earlier in this chapter I mentioned the importance of bridging the gap between work and our sense of meaning that we have in our lives. It is for this reason that without the formative, orienting and interactive

facets of our moral concerns, the legislative facet will have a very external appearance. Corporate ethics need to have the vibrating emotional intelligence, that can close the gap between rhetoric and reality.

In search of the emotionally intelligent organisation

The thematic thrust of this chapter is to emphasise the point that reinventing a new management ethic means that those who work, as well as those who lead, have to find a deep sense of purpose and a passion for what they do. Such a sense of purpose and passion may heal the sense of fragmentation between work, home and life, as well as one's relationship with others. In ethics, alternative paths, alternative perspectives, and different options for decisions will always exist. Across cultures and religions, as well as philosophies, differences will exist. But excessive debates on ethical principles should give attention to contexts, people, details, and the moment to moment flow of our thoughts and feelings.

One of the key questions that Piper raises in his search for a rediscovery of purpose is whether there is an implicit model of human nature (of greed and selfishness or sharing and caring) that guides management studies. Understanding human emotions contributes greatly to this quest.

The integration of emotional intelligence or emotional literacy into corporate life has been a basic aim that I have pursued here. The thesis has been unfolding in the work of Howard Gardner, Peter Salovey and J M Meyer, and more recently given a popular exposition by David Goleman. According to Goleman, the concept of emotional intelligence embodies five distinctive ways in which we may deal with our emotions, and these different strands need to be seen in an integrated way:

- Knowing one's emotions and self-understanding: the 'ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment is crucial to psychological insight' (Goleman 1996:43). It is said that those who have a clear knowledge of their feelings are better pilots of their lives. Goleman

clarifies the meaning of self-awareness: 'My usage of *self-awareness* refers to a self-reflexive, introspective attention to one's own experience, sometimes called *mindfulness*' (Goleman 1996:315).

- The ability to manage one's own emotions. This type of skill helps people to manage the stress and anxieties of daily life and, equally importantly, the adversities and the ups and downs of life.
- The ability to use emotions to reach desirable goals, thus increasing one's productivity and effectiveness.
- Being sensitive to the emotions of others. People who are empathetic begin to understand the social signals of others.
- The art of handling relationships with others and the management of the emotions of others.

According to Gardner, who developed the notion of multiple intelligence, human competencies range from linguistic, musical, logico-mathematical, spatial and body-kinesthetic to personal intelligence. Personal intelligence takes two forms, one being access to one's own feelings and range of emotions, the other the ability to notice and make distinctions among other individuals, their moods, temperaments and motivations. These intrapersonal and interpersonal forms are marshaled as systems of meaning in different symbolic ways in the diversity of cultures (Gardner 1993:238–244). The work of Freud and writings of Proust are examples of the former, and Mahatma Gandhi exhibited the latter variety of personal intelligence.

There has recently been a revival of interest in Gardner's work, and what mostly concerns us here is putting emotional intelligence to work within organisations, and corporations—notably those dimensions of the concept that illuminate the ethico-psychological facets of a corporate spirit. The thesis that an ethics divorced from psychology tends to be abstract and lacking in realism is a point that has influenced my writings over the years. But the point has been given a very sound exposition and analysis by the moral psychology group comprising of Lawrence Blum, Owen Flanagan, David Wong and Ameli Rorty (Blum 1994:vii). In such a psychologically informed approach to moral theory, the linkage

between emotion studies and ethics becomes very important. Such perspectives may be seen in the ancient writings of Aristotle and the early Buddhist tradition. I shall briefly sum up the EQ (Emotional Quotient) qualities often brought out in the literature by using a recent work on putting emotional intelligence to work (Ryback 1998:108, 1190).

The non-judgmental attitude—as opposed to attitudes of self-righteousness—is a basic starting point. This quality, greatly emphasised in contemplative meditative traditions, takes a balanced view on their perspectives of ethics and morality. It is an understanding morality rather than an indignation morality (de Silva 1984c). It helps people, whether they are a business executive or the leader of a social movement, to be perceptive of others' feelings. 'Only by coming from the inner serenity of a "quiet heart" can one be truly perceptive of other's feelings and intentions' (Ryback 1998:110).

A great deal of anger in our daily life is 'moral anger', issuing from misplaced emotions of righteous indignation. When you do not have attitudes of self-righteousness and are more sensitive to the sentiments of others, this kind of anger is minimised.

Another quality would be sincerity about feelings and intentions. Such a pattern of authenticity helps us to weed out hypocrisy, deceit, deception and the like, what philosopher Andrew Brennan calls '*akrasia* in corporate life' (de Silva 1998a). The quotation from Tolstoy at the beginning of this chapter sums up the theme of self-deception in a graphic manner.

If problems emerge in the workplace (or home for that matter), the emotionally intelligent executive does not put them in the freezer, conceal them, procrastinate, or delegate them to others. She or he would face the problem, accept responsibility and be very open. Ryback says that even if the feelings are heated, it is necessary to confront the problem and the individuals concerned. But here, one has to use one's judgment as to how soon one should take up the issue. A little cooling-off time may be useful. I remember a Vietnamese Buddhist leader saying, 'I meet her again on Sunday' when the heat has subsided. Maybe lovers'

quarrels and conflicts among executives can have common techniques of resolution.

The good executive will be able to find the relevant facts for taking decisions or settling disputes, as 'the devil is in the detail'. One has to glean facts from those who try to find shade in abstractions and slogans. Iris Murdoch's 'nostalgia for the particular' is well in place.

From an EQ point of view, expressiveness is a very important quality. 'The old-style executives were dour and expressionless, probably convinced that a display of humanity would be seen as a sign of weakness. The emotionally intelligent executive is the opposite, pulsing with vibrant personality' (Ryback 1998:113). Of course, this does not imply a wildness, but a sensibility with refinement, propriety, and an awareness of others. In fact, in my own life, I have found 'silence' in certain contexts—deep silence that precedes conversation and a tranquil quietude as one speaks—to be effective. We have to sort out the right type of emotion and the right type of expressiveness. This is where education in literature, poetry, art and music provides a great resource for the art of communication. There are people who have a great story for every occasion.

The final quality of emotional intelligence is supportiveness, backed by loyalty and acceptance. Tone of voice, eye contact, facial expression, warm handshakes, and pats on the back all have a place in communicating warmth and acceptance.

Other important qualities of an executive with EQ would be: a certain kind of boldness—to say something challenging when necessary, without being abrasive; and zeal in leadership and self-assurance, encouraging others to levels of risk-taking and achievement.

The concept of emotional intelligence: some philosophical issues

This is an area where I have done a considerable amount of research, but in the context of the main concerns of this chapter, I shall summarise the most important issues and a response to a number of questions

about the philosophical viability of EQ. Philosophers have discussed the issues pertaining to the dichotomy between rationality and emotions, and the idea that emotions do not have any epistemic status, or claims to knowledge. But as far as I am aware hardly any philosopher has yet attempted to look at the specific concept of EQ, except for one attempt to raise some important questions about EQ. Having quite correctly pointed out that we live at a time when values, morality and religion are not grounded in realities, and that they are becoming relativised, individualised and subjectivised, E M Adams says that we do not have a conceptual framework to critically assess our feelings, emotions and impulses. He also says that instead of critically assessing them in terms of logical reasoning, we follow a therapeutic and treatment approach to control or transform our emotions. But he is baffled by Goleman's claim that the mere awareness of feelings and emotions leads to emotional intelligence (Adams 1998:1-5). Goleman does not clarify this processes of awareness in detail, except for saying that that this refers to the practice of mindfulness (Goleman 1996:315).

Adams' criticism needs an answer to clarify how the practice of mindfulness generates emotional intelligence, and to show that the two methods of mindfulness practice and rational criticism do not exclude each other. If you accept a holistic concept of emotions, concerns like bodily arousal in *akrasia* (giving in to temptation) respond better to mindfulness practice than rational criticism in many contexts. There are also systems of therapy, such as Albert Ellis' 'emotive cognitive therapy', which combines analysis of false beliefs pertaining to emotions with therapy. We have to move away from the kind of dualistic thinking in Adams if we wish to move towards a more holistic view of using all possible resources for healing the fragmentation in our lives. The main points of Adams' criticism may be summarised as follows:

- The mere awareness of ones own feelings and impulses (and those of others) does not make one's resulting feelings rational. It is not a rational procedure.
- Intelligence is a cognitive matter involving comprehension and critical judgment.

- Issues pertaining to the emotions need to be examined within an epistemological or educational framework and not a therapeutic one.
- The tendency to bring about emotional transformation by a treatment or causal approach rather than rational criticism or correction is questionable.

Epistemological issues

The term 'emotional intelligence' is a little misleading. Adams calls it an oxymoron. In my writings I have used other terms like 'emotional sensibility' and 'emotional maturity'. One possible response which I tend to accept is that there are many contexts where reason and emotion need not be seen in the form of ritualised opposition, but as supplementing and complementing. Even on neurological grounds this is a sound stance. There was a philosopher who said that there is no need to create any conceptual duality in the way that we wear trousers—if there is a right side for the right leg, there is a left side for the left leg. William James said that if we abstract from our consciousness its affective features and bodily symptoms, we shall only be left with a cold and intellectual perception (see de Silva 1998b). A holistic concept of emotions will accept both the cognitive facet and the arousal aspect of an emotion.

Another interesting point about emotions is that they generate a sense of 'salience', giving a direction for controlling our perception and belief formation. This point has been shown by Ronald de Soysa in a well-argued study of the rationality of emotions. He says: 'Like scientific paradigms...emotions are better at stimulating research in certain directions than at finding compelling and fair reasons for their own adoption. They are too 'deep' for that, too unlike specific beliefs' (de Soysa 1987:198). In general, both in the work of the philosopher de Soysa and the neurologist Damasio, the thesis unfolds that emotions, rather than being sand in the machinery of action, can actually promote rational behaviour in situations of indeterminacy.

Their argument is not—or not only—that a person without emotions would make irrational decisions. They also claim...that in many

situations this person would make no decision at all or delay it for a long time, and that such abstention or procrastination could be irrational (Elster 1999:287–288).

Thus there is an emotional flatness and indecisiveness. Elster also says that they go beyond this thesis, and are saying that positive emotions play a causal role in rational decision making.

Let us look at self-deception and *akrasia* (temptation). It is true that in instances of self-deception and *akrasia*, emotions may drown reason. But then reason itself often creates its web of self-deception. The most important point about *akrasia* in the context of this chapter is that intellectual conviction that is not reflected in the day to day practice is mere rhetoric. It is here that a concept like ‘emotional sensibility’, in the way that I use it in my own writings, may be useful. The term indicates that there is more to be done than simply integrating emotions and reasoning (for example in compassion); there is also a contemplative element that will generate an ethic for meaningful living. The sense of majesty and clinical sacredness that we give to every moment of our life comes with the practice of mindfulness. There are lots of things for which we can produce arguments and empirical evidence against, but often we fail to stick to our sense of doing the right thing. In my own studies of contemplative philosophy, it appears that being ‘rational’ and ‘logical’ does not necessarily bring one closer to reality. It is necessary to speak of a sensibility where reason and emotions work together. In pedagogy, we have to supplement logical and analytical reasoning (propositional discourse) with narrative discourse. Communication requires multi-dimensional strategies.

The cognitive theories of emotions do give a strong base for the rational criticism of emotions. But cognitive theories of emotions may be weak on a number of grounds, and they need to be replaced by a more holistic concept of emotions integrating bodily arousal, desires, action tendencies, facial expressions and neurological and socio-cultural factors (de Silva 1998b:13–35). Contemplative practices like the practice of mindfulness are more effective in penetrating all these facets of a negative emotions, as well as cognitive distortions.

Goleman, in defining his first component of EQ, says that the term, 'awareness of one's feelings and impulses' refers to the contemplative practice of mindfulness; Adams does not appear to have an understanding of how mindfulness practice enhances emotional sensibility. I have already alluded to the neurological issues by citing the work of Antonio Damasio.

Therapeutic issues

There is no need to make a rift between the therapeutic and the epistemological; they may go together. This is shown by Martha Nusbaum, describing the philosophy of the ancient Stoics and the Epicureans, which is also true of many Indian and Chinese philosophies:

They saw the philosopher as a compassionate physician whose arts could heal many pervasive types of suffering. They practised philosophy not as a detached intellectual technique dedicated to the display of cleverness but as an immersed and worldly art of grappling with misery. They focused their attention, in consequence, on issues of daily and human significance—the fear of death, love and sexuality, anger and aggression—issues that are some times avoided as embarrassingly messy and personal by the more detached varieties of philosophy (Nusbaum 1994:3).

It may be said that there is no problem in accepting that the practice of mindfulness is different to the accepted canons of rationality and cognitive criticism. But it does not necessarily mean that these two methods may not exist side by side or even supplement each other. Mindfulness may in fact be more effective in breaking through a hard crust of repressed emotions. Our everyday existence is over-intellectualised. We use language, concepts and categories in our conversation, but in our inner chatter we use all kinds of stories to flatter our self-image. If we slow down the tempo of our lives and silence the operation of our linguistic tools, we can listen to the sensations of the body, be alert to the fact that our autonomic nervous system has generated a whole series of reactive visceral changes, that the face has reddened, blood pressure has increased, breathing patterns have changed and so on. Thus we become capable of noticing the

automatic and mechanical quality of consciousness, see the raw data of experience, without adding or subtracting anything; we can reach inaccessible and repressed areas in our minds, and develop reflexive knowledge about ourselves. Emotional sensibility that emerges from the practice of mindfulness may have claims equal to those of the cognitive criticism presented by Adams, claims which are epistemic, therapeutic and educational, as well as being grounded in the ongoing research on emotions in physiology, neurology and psychoneuroimmunology.

AQ and the emotionally intelligent executive

Given equal opportunities and assets, why do some people, overcome adversity and climb the difficult mountain, while others quit the journey? While some succeed, no matter what obstacles they encounter, others are crushed by the challenges of adversity. There are those who may even convert obstacles into opportunities, or brass in to gold. Paul Stoltz, who has specialised in peak learning and organisational communication, discusses this theme in his book *Adversity quotient* (1997). His main thesis about AQ is backed and enriched by research from three areas, psychoneuroimmunology, neuro-physiology and cognitive psychology.

As mentioned earlier, converting unexpected changes and losses to opportunities is very much related to the notion of resilience. Another important task is the attempt to break the automatic and mechanical chain of reactions of helplessness and defeat—the feeling that one just cannot do it. Reducing time spent on self-blame, working towards self-efficacy and confidence, and working towards creative and productive pathways in career, society and personal life are facets of a good AQ. Breaking through automatic reactions of defeat and helplessness interests me very much, as the contemplative traditions of the East have techniques for befriending the demons of fear, despair, anger and depression.

Work in the area of cognitive psychology maintains that beliefs about events rather than events themselves generate reactions, and thus there is a need to challenge negative beliefs regarding oneself and the future.

The loss of perceived control over adverse events, came to be described as the notion of learned helplessness, and is a definite barrier to empowerment. Very much related to the notion of learned helplessness is the attributional theory: that people's success depends on the way they interpret the adverse challenges before them. If you consider adversity as external, temporary and limited, you have greater chance of overcoming it.

Psychoneuroimmunology shows that there is a direct link between what you think and feel, and what goes into your body. Recent research in neurology point towards the thesis that 'the brain has an amazing ability to take repeated thoughts or behaviors and hardwire them into subconscious, automatic patterns or habits' (Stoltz 1997:82). With destructive habits, this pattern has disastrous consequences for the individual. Stoltz thinks that AQ is superior to the EQ concept described by Goleman, because AQ may be measurable, can be validated, and it is backed by a definite method of learning.

Your EQ, which remains a hypothetical measure, reflects your ability to empathize with others, postpone gratification, control your impulses, be self-aware, persist, and interact effectively with others. Citing several examples Goleman argues convincingly that, in life, EQ is more important than IQ. As with IQ, however, not every one takes advantage of their EQ, stopping short of their potential despite their valuable skills. Because it lacks a valid measure and a definitive method of learning, emotional intelligence remains elusive (Stoltz 1997:12).

While AQ is important for building corporate spirit, and has been backed by techniques of learning, there are number of qualifying comments that need to be made. It remains as a viable possibility that the components of EQ can be backed by specific learning techniques. The scientific evidence for EQ and AQ are often interlinked. Importantly AQ needs another balancing or tempering dimension. The need to distinguish AQ from a crass competitive spirit, and the importance of equanimity for facing both the success and defeats of life, are important concerns. There are virtues not incorporated in AQ, such as knowing your limits, knowing your real measure, the qualitative differences among different goals, contentment, caring for others, humility, and

self-knowledge that is not limited to the achievement of success. EQ has a broader base for an ethic for reinventing corporate spirit. If AQ emerges on such a broad-based EQ it will help to rectify and overcome a broader set of limitations found within individuals, society and organisations, in the world in which we live. Work and life need to be integrated. Often we need to climb mountains, but sometimes we need to see the mountain in a different way. There are those who say, the pleasure is in travelling but not reaching the journey's end. There are those who say we must climb real mountains, not pseudo-mountains created by our fantasies. Once these supplementary qualities are recognised and added to AQ, EQ and AQ may be well integrated.

Apart from the claim that EQ offers a broader base for developing the corporate spirit and that AQ needs to be integrated within EQ, there are ethical issues which do not come within Stoltz's analysis. The issue regarding the linkages between moral integrity and the encounter with adversity has attracted the attention of moral philosophers. And in the context of this chapter, this is an important dimension that brings psychological and ethical concerns together. For example, willingness to tell the truth, keeping promises, breaking moral silence and muteness, and maintaining one's commitments under conditions of adversity bring to our minds the key factor of integrity. As a moral philosopher Mark Halfon says:

This is a particularly important claim since it provides a basis for distinguishing integrity from such virtues as sincerity, honesty, and fidelity. In other words, in the absence of a willingness to face adversity a person can exhibit these virtues but not integrity (Halfon 1989:39).

Also, factors such as defining different kinds of adversity from a moral perspective, and the limits or the expected intensity of adversity, become important. According to Halfon, commitment in the face of adversity is a mark of integrity. Apart from the possible limits of an AQ concept that leaves out ethical considerations, there are important psychological considerations.

The emotionally intelligent executive should be able to perceive the strengths and weaknesses of others in terms of their personalities.

Ryback, in discussing this issue, refers to four personality profiles: the persuaders, achievers, listeners and fact-finders. According to available psychological tests that divide people into the four groups, the following descriptions typify the distinctive traits: people-oriented persuaders enjoy leadership; decisive achievers enjoy meeting challenging problems head-on with self-discipline and stubborn determination; group-oriented supportive listeners are open and compassionate; detail-oriented fact-finders pride themselves on objectivity and accuracy (Ryback 1998:151–152). While all these types are important, the thematic strand highlighted in this chapter is the pathway to self-knowledge through listening to the tenor of your mind and body and those of others—the inner serenity of a quiet heart is truly perceptive of one's own feelings and others (the first ingredient of EQ in Goleman's list). It is this spirit of resilience that helps one endure pain and crisis, and transform brass into gold. It is what Little refers to as 'containing'—a gift of listening that calms and energises at the same time. Ryback says that an ideal embodiment of this quality is found in the art of listening of the Dalai Lama, who has converted crisis and pain into compassion. Since each personality type can work towards a balance by cultivating the qualities of others, supportive listening is something that all personality types need. If the AQ concept highlights decisive achievers, it needs the sobering nuances of supportive silence and listening.

Moving from an argumentative culture to a therapeutic culture

Today, professionals need to move from an 'argumentative culture' to a 'therapeutic culture'. According to Deborah Tannen, we are the slaves of the disjunctive logic of either/or, ritualised opposition rooted in an adversarial frame of mind. She says that often, we think that to prove that we are right, we have to show that others are wrong. The goal is not to listen and understand but to win the argument. We always emphasise the point that a question has two sides, though some questions may have many sides. She says that 'The increasingly adversarial spirit of our contemporary lives is fundamentally related to a phenomenon

that has been much remarked upon in recent years: the breakdown of a sense of community' (Tannen 1998:26). As the media flourish often on these debates, metaphors like the battle between the sexes, the war on drugs, great debates and raging controversies, may add some excitement to keep dull and bored minds entranced.

While styles of adversarial encounter are also found in Asian cultures, Tannen brings examples from these cultures to describe some alternative ways of confronting disagreement, going beyond the victor–vanquished metaphor. Instead of saying that some party is right or wrong, there is the metaphor of health, that the body politic is diseased. There is also ritual opposition that does not destroy one or both parties. Conflict situations are not always negative, if we can 'contain' them. Metaphors of health, of cooking and ritual cleansing, fudging the victor–vanquished dichotomy do show that there are ingenious ways of resolving conflicts and disagreement in family, workplace, society and politics. To transform the context of a meeting from debate to dialogue and conversation is the mark of a good listener. It is not the silence of ignorance, embarrassment, repression or arrogance. It is not the silence with an inner chatter in the mind of should and should not, right and wrong. It is the silence of deep and compassionate listening, which is a mark of real emotional intelligence.

At a time when we are drowned by the flood of information technology and computer networks, it would be unfashionable to explore the role of silence as an educator, and as an educator of the emotions. But to break through entrenched perspectives, the clutter of false opinions, deposited layers of stories we fabricate to flatter ourselves, and all the negative ways of being that, as Tolstoy says, we have woven thread by thread in to the fabric of our lives, certain forms of silence may function as a good educator and an effective counsellor. This is the reason why the first component of self-knowledge in the five EQ ingredients is important. At a time when contemplative meditative techniques are used for stress reduction and relaxation, it would be good to go beyond these self-imposed limits and search for their viability as real educators.

If with an empty mind we can listen to the sound of silence, we can discover an easy way, a natural transition to the landscapes of inner confusion in our minds, of anger and indignation, greed, desire and anxiety, conceit, vanity and the inroads of a narcissistic self. When the mind is still and its internal dialogues and chatter subside, the deeply ingrained paths of automatic thinking become transparent. There is no accumulation of reactive judgments or the storing of opinions. The webs and tangles of the ways of the self thin out and the familiar traps vanish in stages. These pathways to self-awareness and understanding are also the great resource for developing interpersonal relationships with a great openness and receptivity.

Concluding thoughts

I have not examined here the wider social, economic, political and cultural dimensions of the search for the emotionally intelligent organisation. There are structural issues pertaining to business organisations and corporations, that makes it difficult to deal with problems of corruption, the rights of employees and related concerns. For instance, mainstream economic ideas have generated despair and frustration for those concerned about environmental crises in the world in which we live. The social paradigms that have dominated our lives, particularly the economic and political ethos that have guided our management of the environment, do need re-examination. It is necessary for business organisations to make an honest change of outlook and not just make external concessions to green issues. The search for emotionally intelligent people and organisations cannot operate in a vacuum. Revitalising our economies and rebuilding our communities and energising our communitarian outlook provide the most congenial soil for the emergence of a truly human intelligence. In this respect, the social dimensions of emotions are important. An emerging new strand of literature focussing our attention on the public face of emotions (Little 1999) attempts to find some of these missing links. But this is a very early innovative work on a long and fascinating path. Perhaps, if we explore this path with the industrial diligence of ants, each person adding to the larger whole we will make progress. Reinventing a management

ethic or a corporate spirit cannot ignore the symptoms of a larger malady in the world in which we live. This chapter has been mainly concerned with the management of organisations and the search for emotional intelligence in the life and work of professionals, as well as any missing links in the academic curriculum for training professionals, especially in the area of management and business studies.

Fortunately, highly innovative research on social behaviour seems to indicate that there are people who have made exceptional commitments to help others. Recent studies have shown that altruism is not one single thing but many distinctive things, and the dominating theories in economics, evolutionary biology and some of the psychology asserting that people are self-interested cannot capture the heart of altruism.

This perspective provides a feeling of being strongly linked to others through a shared humanity and constitutes such a central core to altruists' identity that it leaves them with no choice in their behaviour when others are in great need. It is this perspective that best distinguishes altruists from traditional rational actors (Monroe 1996:234).

Such studies of social behaviour offer some hope to those who wish to build our society, economics, business and politics on communitarian lines. It is a hope that offers immense challenges. Reinventing the corporate spirit will always face such challenges emerging from the larger social sphere of human behaviour.

The framework for understanding emotions is self-knowledge. This does not in any way imply a withdrawal from human relationships, for we discover ourselves not in isolation but in relationships with our children, partners, neighbours, society, workplace, and also with nature. And we discover how we respond and react to them. This has to be done through vigilance and industriousness, in the moment to moment flow of our existence. The understanding of what we are and who we are is the first step on the way to building healthy and passionate human relations at home, in society and workplace. Then it is possible to move out of the reactive, addictive and narcissistic framework of the mind, which often distorts human relationships. In the words of Roger Lewin

(1996:118), 'Communicating with others depends on our capacity to communicate with ourselves just as communicating with ourselves depends on our capacity for communicating with others'.

Exploring new dimensions for a Buddhist work ethic: Mindfulness practice and emotional maturity

Practitioners, and scholars know—if only by reflecting on their own experiences—that organizational life is unavoidably saturated with emotion and that emotion often has marked effects on thought and action. Organizations, at the micro level, are about people and how they encounter their tasks, each other, and the vicissitudes of the day. Emotions occur naturally and spontaneously as people navigate their work worlds. Thus emotions are not something that can be walled off from rationalized work; they are endemic to living, whether one is in the office or home (Ashforth 2000:i).

These insightful observations are from a foreword to a study of emotions in the workplace that combines, research, theory and practice. The breakdown of the linkages between life, work and home in contemporary times means that our lives tend to be excessively fragmented. To be passionate about life is also to be passionate about work and family. To be intelligent, wise and passionate in running our lives, emotional sensibility is crucial. The ability to understand negative emotions, the negative aspects of certain emotions, and the cultivation of positive emotions forms an integral facet of the Buddhist way of life. Negative emotional qualities of anger, fear and depression, as well as the positive role of loving kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity are the subjects of frequent discussion in the dialogues of the Buddha. These insights are relevant to work, home and life. Right livelihood indicates a Buddhist perspective on the work ethic, and the eightfold noble path as a whole provides an integrated perspective for a work ethic. Right livelihood in the discourses of the Buddha is generally associated with not taking to professions where one might violate the basic ethical precepts of Buddhism pertaining to killing, stealing, irresponsible sexual behaviour, lying and taking intoxicants and drugs. But an ideal work ethic on a more positive level involves the cultivation of more positive virtues, like combining the earning of

a living or running a business with service, working with others, shedding one's egocentric outlook, having a sane lifestyle, developing frugality but avoiding the vices of miserliness and wastage, practising generosity, and cultivating compassion, understanding, empathy and truthfulness. On a deeper level Buddhism encourages the lay person or the householder to cultivate mindfulness in daily life. If this quality is cultivated in the workaday world, people are able to develop an open inner space and display emotional sensibility in speech, behaviour and action. These qualities are not limited to a Buddhist ethic; such a sensibility forms the basic ethic of all world religions and secular humanism. The ability to face change and go through crises calls for patience, confidence and endurance. It is necessary not to indulge in self-blame, as compassion to oneself is necessary before it can reach others. Boldness, zeal and persistence are healthy qualities that counteract any proclivity towards laziness, helplessness and depression.

In the previous chapter it was pointed out that an important component of what is described as emotional intelligence is the awareness of one's own emotions, especially the ability to monitor feelings from moment to moment. Such a development of self-awareness in a Buddhist context would be considered as the development of mindfulness. Mindfulness in Buddhist practice in simpler terms indicates presence of mind and may be described with the metaphor, 'watch your step'. In ordinary life, mindfulness or attention may be directed to any object, but is rarely sustained for purposeful and careful observation. It is often followed by emotional reaction, inner chatter of the mind and habitual actions. The Buddha used the term *sati* to refer to what we call mindfulness and the term *sati sampajanna* to refer to the clear comprehension of the purpose of actions. In the context of Buddhism, the comprehension of purpose is related to the eightfold noble path: right understanding (or right view), right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right contemplation. In exploring a work ethic, there is an important connection between right livelihood and mindfulness, but all other elements are related. In fact, a very good attempt to locate the place of mindfulness practice in meaningful work and right livelihood has already been made both at the theoretical and

practical levels by Claude Whitmyer (1994). I shall sum up some of the basic themes in this work and then explore the Buddhist ethic concerning emotions in the workplace.

All the essays in Whitmyer's book are concerned with attitudes to work that become a spiritual discipline, so that the work will be less demeaning and more meaningful, without any damage to ourselves and the environment. It is an attempt to bring the head, hand and the heart together. There is also a focus on shared responsibility and working together as a group. The Briarpatch Society, composed of pioneers researching a new concept of work and business, was drawn together by a 'shared belief that business did not have to be synonymous with greed, corruption, and profit at any cost' (Whitmyer 1994:6). As Schumacher points out with great clarity, a Buddhist work ethic attempts to give people the opportunity to develop their inner potential, enable them to overcome egocentricity by working with others, and bring forth the goods and services needed for a decent existence. He says that due to metaphysical blindness, economists consider labour a necessary evil, whereas for the Buddhist it is a vital expression of the quest for meaning (Schumacher 1993).

Right livelihood in the Buddhist sense is different from just finding a job; it requires work that is integrated in to one's system of values and vision and well integrated in to a style of life. Whitmyer sums up his project with a number of features that characterise those who stand for right livelihood and work accordingly: persistence, the ability to face facts, the effort to minimise risk, the pursuit of learning, creativity, the ability to generate energy, being rooted in a community, emotional stability and mindfulness. The discourses of the Buddha refer to the human desire for wealth, which can be obtained in four ways: by energetic striving; by the strength of one's arms; by the sweat of one's brow; and by righteous means (A iv:61). The Buddha also refers to four types of happiness found in right livelihood: happiness of possession, of enjoyment, of debtlessness and blamelessness (A iv:62).

Though Whitmyer mentions emotional stability as one of the features of right livelihood, he does not discuss emotional stability in detail from a Buddhist perspective. I shall explore that theme in this chapter.

What is the role of emotions in the workplace according to the Buddhist ideals of a work ethic and right livelihood?

In general, our motivational cycle is fed by our addictive temperament (*lobha*), which has a counter-charge in our reactive temperament (*dosa*) when we do not get what we wish to obtain. This addiction–reaction syndrome is also fed by our natural propensity to be elated by our in-built narcissism (*moha*), which clouds our self-understanding. These three roots and their power have to be understood and their sway over our lives minimised, and positive emotions of generosity, contentment, compassion and patience cultivated. The self-image is a difficult issue, but one has to develop a healthy achievement motive, learn to work in a group and, best of all, be of service to the community. Conceit, arrogance, vanity, dullness and depression need to be minimised and eradicated—not by excessive control, but by gentle restraint, understanding and a processes of letting go. A Buddhist therapeutic stance always finds the denial of negative emotions like anger very destructive, and one has to begin with acceptance and gentle observation. Escape routes and the use of the defence mechanisms of deception, rationalisation and reaction formation will be counter-productive, creating a greater mess. Our emotions are crucial pathways for acquiring self-knowledge. A clear and insightful understanding of one's repertoire of emotions may illuminate dark patches in our minds. It is necessary to generate clarity, flexibility and insight into our emotional lives. Understanding emotions is not only a motivational asset; it is an important cognitive skill in the perception and appraisal of ourselves and others. This aspect has been greatly emphasised by Mayer and Salovey in developing a new model of emotional intelligence (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2000). This goes beyond the model that has been given a popular exposition by Goleman. Both models need to be integrated to a Buddhist perspective on emotional intelligence. For the present, the perception and expression of emotions, assimilating emotions in thought, understanding them and their reflective regulation are all important facets of a broad Buddhist perspective on emotions. The crucial ingredient that makes a Buddhist contribution to both emotional intelligence and sensibility, as well as a good work ethic, is the practice of mindfulness. In the Buddhist eightfold path, this practice

is located in the practice of morality, concentration and wisdom. Whitmyer has indicated that using mindfulness to find meaningful work in actual practice has clear support in Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures (Whitmyer 1994:252). In fact, it is possible to extend this concept to include a broad-based, secular, humanistic perspective.

Emotional maturity, mindfulness practice and the work ethic

Our everyday existence is over intellectualised. We use language, concepts and categories in our conversation. We also inevitably generate chains of reasoning, sometimes to make decisions, but often to pass judgment, manipulate and control people. We tell ourselves stories to find reasons to feel good, assure ourselves that we have done the correct thing and so on. Of course we do at times reason in a sensible way, thinking intelligently. But we do have a hard crust of accumulated conditioning, ways of confronting situations, automatic and mechanical, so that we do not always follow logical lines of reasoning. Thus the EQ concept may contribute to good thinking by supplementing our cultivated analytic intelligence with wisdom from our hearts. Mere intellectual conviction does not always inspire us to prevent being a prey to negative emotions or generate positive emotion. The ability to accurately perceive, appraise, and express emotions, the ability to access feelings that facilitate thinking, the ability to understand emotions and utilise emotional knowledge, and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2000) offer a congenial soil in which reason can grow. This is the new message about integrating IQ and EQ. The study of emotions in organisational life is recent, with the work of Mayer and Salovey being a catalyst. To introduce the concept of mindfulness to these emerging trends of thought is only to suggest an interesting line of thinking, bridging Western and Eastern philosophical cultures.

Mindfulness practice attempts to slow down the tempo of our lives, to silence our normal tools of linguistic competencies during short spells of during leisure hours, and to develop lucidity and clarity in thought, speech and behaviour during routine life. By continuing a certain flow

of mindfulness in daily life, we add a presence of mind to what we do, are more sensitive to our speech acts, and more selective in our usage of words and concepts, and most importantly generate a sensitivity to the feelings of others in communicating what we wish to say. It helps us to be less and less reactive and addictive and to remember our own narcissism before we develop an eye for the faults of others. Research on the body and brain indicates the speed with which reflex impulses and feelings of reactivity work in us. We need a method of slowing down the tempo of our lives, silencing our categorical ways of seeing others and the world, temporarily suspending our acquired linguistic and conceptual tools and listening to the sensations of the body—being alert to the sensations of the body, being alert to the fact that that I am about to raise a clenched fist, realising that my face has reddened, the blood pressure has increased, the veins on the forehead are becoming visible, breathing patterns have changed, and I am trying hard to control uttering a few hard words. When we develop reflexive knowledge about the way our emotions emerge, the attentive observations of the body and the thought formations emerging in the mind are both important. As I have discussed elsewhere, there are innumerable ways in which the body and the mind work in a reciprocal relationship (de Silva 2000).

It takes time and a great deal of reflection to open up a passage between East and West on this issue of the body and mind in emotions and the place of mindfulness as an experiential processes. For instance, Stuart Hampshire says:

Whether a change in the state of my body is watched by me or not will not in general make any difference to the change. The attentive observation of physical happenings normally, and with certain disquieting and marginal exceptions, has no effect on the physical happenings... (Hampshire 1972:247).

But a Buddhist perspective on emotions and mindfulness practice lay great emphasis on the mindfulness of the body and bodily sensations. In fact, mindfulness of body as well as mindfulness of physical and mental facets of feelings are key areas in mindfulness practice. Also Buddhism gives great weightage to the reciprocal working of mind and body, seeing them as integrated and thereby upholding a more

holistic conception of emotions (de Silva 2000). A Buddhist perspective on emotion theories would give an important role to both the cognitive and the arousal theories of emotions, and go beyond the current dispute between the followers of these two theories, both in philosophy and psychology. In the higher reaches of meditation practice, a person commands great control over the body, but that is not the product of any intervention of the cognitive rational procedures we possess; rather, it is due to the emergence of new skills and suspension of discursive thought.

Anger in life, work and home

I shall limit the following discussion to the issue of anger and self-knowledge, as it is not possible to go into the wide array of emotions related to the workplace in this short chapter. Once the Buddha was asked that if one had to choose between anger and greed, what would be the lesser evil. The Buddha observed that greed may be less damaging than anger, but it is hard to eradicate, and that anger (if it does not get accumulated as hatred) is easy to let go, but even a temporary state of anger may turn out to be destructive. Thus the important point is not to let anger degenerate in to hatred by suppression and denial. Anger may colour other emotions like envy, contempt, depression and despair. Whether we experience anger, sadness or fear, the way we relate to these experiences is important. In mindfulness practice we attempt to notice and accept any angry thoughts, images and painful feelings that may get converted in to anger. At the stage of a feeling (*vedana*), if it is a painful feeling, bodily or mental, we quietly put on our brakes, so that it does not go beyond that painful feeling to anger. It is simple anger that degenerates into hatred and violence. While such negative states are noticed and one takes responsibility, we move from a personal stance to a more impersonal stance, so we do not see it as our own anger but as an impersonal process. Personalising anger is a great obstruction to the processes of letting go. Naming anger is useful, so that we learn to identify its nature and distinguish it from other emotions. We may even develop an understanding of the different types of anger: frustration anger, moral anger, annoyance and irritation. But naming is not a process of freezing or grasping, it just enables quiet recognition.

This process of bare attention helps one to tidy the mind by sorting out the confused strands in our mental processes and giving more form and direction to self-knowledge.

I shall cite an example of understanding anger in the context of home and family from the Buddhist literature on recent therapeutic work, a case reported by Olaf Deetherage. A 23-year-old married woman, who was suffering from depression, expressed her inability to be in touch with her feelings, and a total lack of emotion. In a group therapy session using meditation techniques, she focussed attention on her feelings, becoming mindful of them, gradually labelling or naming them. It is reported that she made very good progress within a number of weeks, practising breathing directed towards the body, feelings and emotions, and was able to identify anger, rather than depression, as the emotion that disturbed the marital relationship. She also discovered that she had been misrepresenting her emotions, 'mistakenly believing that she had been experiencing depression whereas strong elements of anger, hostility, self-abasement and disappointment had been present' (Deetherage 1982:26). It was also noted that, 'she was back in touch with the full spectrum of human emotions'. The feelings, thoughts and emotions of this woman became the objects of meditative contemplation in a psychotherapeutic setting. Another psychologist, Douglas Burns says:

Awareness of unconscious feelings is rarely obtained through logical deductions or rational explanations. A person who harbours these feelings will either refuse to believe what he is told or will come to accept it only as much factual information devoid of emotional significance (Burns 1994:31).

Reason is certainly useful when we wish to develop cognitive skills and attempt to understand the logic of different emotions. I am angry because you are not falling in line with my views; because I was not given a fair interview; because you broke the trust I had in you as a friend, and so on. I feel remorse because I spread malicious gossip about a close friend. I am jealous of Fred because his great success at golf is a threat to the unchallenged image I had for years. In contexts of work, home and life, relationships differ, but the logical terrain is similar.

The therapeutic success of Aaron Beck and Albert Ellis shows that on a psychological level cognitive appraisals form an important ingredient of therapy. While behaviour therapy focusses on the processes of conditioning, recent trends have integrated cognitive elements. Gestalt therapy and the work of Maslow and Rogers do accept the importance of the experiential process. But we need a wide variety of methods depending on the person, situation and culture, and the nature of the case study. These techniques are not mutually exclusive and they may be combined. Some useful insights regarding elements of behaviour therapy found in Buddhism have been pointed out by Padmal de Silva (1997:64–69). One of my early interests was in the similarities and differences between Buddhism and Freudian psychotherapy (de Silva, Padmasiri 1992; 1997). Since then Mark Epstein has brought fresh perspectives to Buddhism and Freud (Epstein 1995). These are all themes that need further exploration, perhaps by a group of scholars.

The cross-cultural study of emotions allows interesting insights into the logic of different emotions. Catherine Lutz in a ground breaking study of emotion words:

My sense of what people were saying when they used the term *fago* emerged slowly over the course of my stay in the island, requiring an effort to disentangle my own native emotional understanding from theirs. From the perspective of the implicit notions entailed in the American English terms—including ‘compassion’, ‘love’ and ‘sadness’—that together best translate *fago*, the concept involves some basic internal contradictions. Among other things, ‘love’ is positive and activating, ‘sadness’ negative and enervating; the loving person is strong, the sad person, weak. The ethnotheoretical notions surrounding the emotions with which I had come to Ifaluk created the structure of bafflement that I felt at seeing the diverse contexts within which the term was used (Lutz 1995:235–36).

Lutz’s study of the Ifaluk atoll in Micronesia showed that the term *fago* was used to cover compassion, love and sadness, articulating the place of suffering in life, the naturalness of interpersonal kindness in the face of that pain, and of the feeling that ‘emotional maturity’ is the ability to nurture others.

Fago speaks of the sense that life is fragile, that connections to others are both precious and liable to severance through death and travel, that love may equal loss. *Fago* is uttered in recognition of the suffering that is everywhere and in the spirit of a vigorous optimism that human effort, most specially in the form of caring for others, can control its ravages (Lutz 1995:235).

The term is a compressed formula for a whole cultural perspective on suffering, which offers a kind of shock absorber for loss and sadness, so that it may not become depression and anger. Lutz's work is of great interest in the context of the Buddhist understanding of suffering, *dukkha*. Briggs's study of Eskimo culture (1970) also again opens cross-cultural insights. When people migrate to new countries for work, often the sustaining bases of certain cultural mechanisms may be absent, equally enriching alternatives may be found, and adjustment may be easy or difficult. In the world in which we live today, significant insights that may be obtained from a cross-cultural understanding of emotions in work, home and life. Alternative therapies have weaknesses and dangers but they also offer real strength when they are practised by those with the necessary understanding and skills, when they are contextualised, and when they are performed with an open mind.

Discussion of anger in the discourses of the Buddha

While there is a great deal of material in the discourses on the sources of anger, manifestation of anger, the possible consequences and the methods for dealing with anger, I shall only highlight the contexts relevant to our discussion in this chapter. The difference between anger as a passing phase and hatred as a more ingrained quality is expressed through some graphic metaphors in the discourses. Short lived anger is like a carving on water; a stronger sense of resentment is like a carving on the ground; deep-seated hatred is like a carving on a rock (A i:283). Even a passing painful feeling may arouse subliminal proclivities to anger. Pleasant feelings rouse subliminal lust and greed and painful feelings excite tendencies towards aversion and resentment. The following is a typical example of the strong dispositional quality of anger.

Mallika, a certain woman is ill-tempered, of a very irritable nature, she shows temper and ill will and displeasure. Moreover, she is jealous minded, she is jealous of other folks' gain. She is revengeful and harbours a grudge (A ii:202).

While the strong dispositional quality of anger is recognised, there are also number of contexts where the situational factors are recognised. Even if a monk is gentle, and meek, disagreeable speech may disturb his tranquil state of mind (M i:156).

Another such instance is the case of the householder Lady Videkha, who was by nature gentle, tranquil and meek. A very clever and diligent maid wished to test this lady's patience, and got up late on three successive days. On the first day, the lady was displeased and a bit angry; the second day the lady used words of displeasure; the third day the lady lost her temper and gave a strong blow on the head of the maiden, which caused an injury. Thus it is said that if one's mind is calm, collected and tranquil one may pass through such situations without agitation. Thus the mindfulness practice is focussed both on the eruption of these subliminal tendencies and on the disturbances by external situations. The process of transformation works on understanding that our consciousness follows certain causal regularities: contact conditions feeling, feeling conditions craving and craving conditions clinging.

Thus it is Ananda, that craving comes in to being because of feeling, pursuit because of craving, gain because of pursuit, decision because of gain, desire and passion because of decision, tenacity because desire and passion, possession because of tenacity, avarice because of possession, watch and ward because of avarice, and many a bad and wicked state of things arising from keeping watch and ward over possessions. (A ii:58).

To be conditioned by these psychological patterns is not to be determined by them. The Buddha showed that with practise, reflection and contemplation it is possible to break through the bondage of this automatism and achieve liberation. It takes a life of courage, patience and understanding to contemplate and look deeply in to the nature of things as they are. Cessation is natural for any condition which had

arisen. What is left is peace and freedom from the defiling negative emotions. Householders who have not completely renounced but made a compromise with life can travel on the pathways of freedom as far as they genuinely attempt to go. They learn to live with the little agitations, excitement and disappointments that come on the way with understanding and equanimity. They can develop a certain kind of emotional maturity.

I have been interested in this chapter in considering work as spiritual discipline and the place of mindfulness and emotions in right livelihood. It is basically an attempt to bring a spiritual dimension to the householder's work ethic. But for those who have made a firm commitment and are making a persistent effort to move from the bondage of defilements and negative emotions to freedom, those who are committed to a life of renunciation, the path is clear, though difficult. But a good and righteous life, practising the basic five precepts, the virtues of generosity, kindness and compassion, is also a preparation for achieving freedom from the bondage of defilements and negative emotions, craving and clinging. For those who traverse the more difficult path of complete renunciation and reach their goal, when the defilements are dissolved, the natural radiance of the mind is bound to appear.

Epilogue

Landscapes of peace and war

Life has left her footprints on my forehead,
But I have become a child again this morning.
The smile seen through leaves and flowers is back to smooth
away the wrinkles
as the rain wipes away footprints on the beach.
Again, a cycle of birth and death begins.
I walk firmly.
I walk on thorns, but firmly, as among flowers.
I keep my head high
Rhymes bloom among the sounds of bombs and mortars.
The tears I shed yesterday have become rain
I feel calm hearing its sound on a thatch roof.
Childhood, O my birthland is calling me, and the rain melts my despair
I am still alive, able to smile quietly,
the sweet fruit brought about by the tree of suffering.
Carrying the dead body of my brother, I go across the rice field
in the darkness.
Earth will keep you tight within her arms, dear one,
we have gone through too deep a night.
This morning, yes, this morning, I kneel down on the green
grass and I notice your presence.
O, flowers that speak to me in silence,
the message of love and understanding has indeed come.
(Thich 1993:96)

While the message of peace within our minds and in the outer world is what Gotama the Buddha delivered to us 25 centuries ago, today it is relevant more than ever. In a world torn by chaos and violence, technological forms of warfare and terrorism, how can we bring back peace? As an epilogue to the present work, I thought it fitting to bring to our minds the reflections of a great Vietnamese monk and thinker, Thich Nhat Hanh, who has shown through his life and writings that a world in peace is not only possible, but begins right here and now within each of us.

This poem shares in spirit and content Thich Nhat Hanh's reflections on the landscapes of war and peace, his stance on non-violence, peace and reconciliation. Reflecting on the futility, emptiness and devastation of war, which he experienced in Vietnam, through his writings, speeches and social programs, he has presented the ancient message of the Buddha in a relevant and refreshing way. His writings on healing the wounds of Vietnam veterans and the application of Christian ideas to the Gulf War are among the most vibrant and refreshing approaches to issues of war and peace. An important dimension of his thinking is that sowing the seeds of peace is something that we may begin here and now, in the flow of our experience, by looking deeply within ourselves to the three domains of action—body, speech and deed. The real landscapes of both war and peace begin here. Those who have been injured unjustly have pain in their mind, those who are pacifists have pain in their minds, but blaming and arguing are also forms of violence (Thich 1993:67). We need to replace a culture of argument with a culture of understanding. Arguments and counter arguments about the ethics of a 'just war' are not going to restore peace to the world. Getting engrossed in theories as to who is to be blamed and when will not lead us to either inner peace or outer peace.

The Buddha's admonition that hatred is never conquered by hatred, and that only through love can hatred be mastered, is echoed in the life and work of this Vietnamese monk. Living embodiments are necessary to bring back the faith, trust and relevance of ancient wisdom. It is a platform on which different religions, cultures and nations may meet, but communications strategies need to change. The turmoil and the conflicts in the world today, which on the surface have a strong moral flavour and are ignited by thoughts of righteous indignation, seem to indicate that current communication strategies on the peace table do not work. Explaining, persuading and compromising often do not work. Some conflicts have an incommensurate setting and no common measure to generate a full understanding of the conflict. When thinking gets polarised and patterns of communication become divisive, creative forms of communication need to be used. It is a blend of mutual understanding and creative communication strategies that may bring back a sense of sanity to the peace table and outside.

It is against the background of the search for new forms of communication that the poetic message of the Vietnamese Buddhist monk offers some food for thought.

The 'transcendent communication' model (Pearce and Littlejohn 1997) can be used for miniature conflict resolution as well as major forms of conflict resolution. This interesting synthesis of communication theory presents new forms of communication strategies that go beyond the normal ways of dealing with disagreement, using the technique of telling stories and sharing their message through setting, character and narrative. It is a new way of speaking and listening. It is a conversation where people sit side by side, and value listening rather than value speaking, value understanding rather than value speaking, value respect rather than value persuasion. Such an approach may offer a new format for conversation between former opponents (Pearce and Littlejohn 1997:214). Such a conversation has a number of elements. There is critical conversation, where underlying ideas and categories of thinking that are not normally revealed come to the surface. Apart from being dialogic and critical it is also transformative, with old categories replaced by new ways of thinking. In Buddhist terminology, there is a call to practise 'judgment-free' awareness. We feel safe by taking a position for or against an issue, and thus we cannot be free from taking sides. It is this discriminating awareness that creates problems. We need to tolerate uncertainty, and accept that there may be incommensurate social realities in the background for which straightjacket moral categories will not work. When we develop an adversarial frame of mind, we set up a debate, not a dialogue, and replace contrasting perspectives with ritualised opposition: '...opposition does not lead to truth when an issue is not composed of two opposing sides but is a crystal of many sides' (Tannen 1998:13).

In the light of this search for new models of communication strategies for generating peace and resolving conflicts, Thich Nhat Hanh offers in his life, work and writing a model that has emerged from confronting real life situations in Vietnam, and continuous reflection on the search for peace.

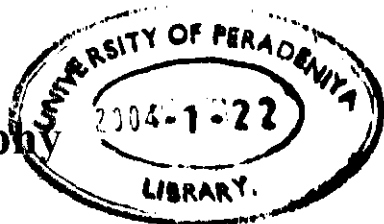
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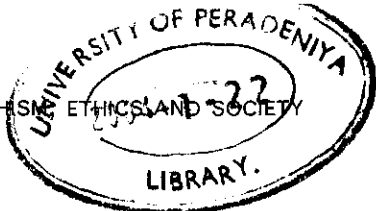
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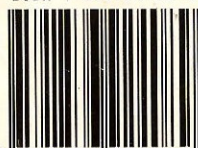
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